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ENGLISH PAPIER-MÂCHÉ

FRONTISPICE (PLATE I.)



ENGLISH PAPIER-MÂCHÉ

Its Origin, Development and Decline

BY

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO MY
WIFE, BY WHOSE KIND AND CLEVER
ASSISTANCE IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN

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PREFACE

THE collector and student of papier-mâché is handicapped by the almost complete absence of literature on the subject.

Two papers only are known to me, one by W. C. Aitken in "The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham" (published in 1866), and the other in "Birmingham Inventions" by W. Prosser (published in 1881). These articles only purport to be sketches, for the business community, of the industry as it existed in the 'sixties, together with a few details of its origin.

The present volume is indebted to the above-mentioned authors for those details, which, supplemented by the recorded patents and inventions and a few particulars from contemporary Trade Directories seem to be the only written information available. I have been fortunate in coming across two or three old workers in papier-mâché factories, of whom very few now survive. To one in particular I am much indebted, viz., Mr. Charles Neville, who, in spite of his 90 years, vividly recalls in wonderful detail, facts and observations of his early life, all of which life he spent in the industry.

Interest in papier-mâché lapsed at the beginning of the last quarter of the 19th century and was succeeded by something like aversion, under which

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the trade waned and the industry disappeared. Now, after fifty years of neglect, the merits of the fine craftsmanship that some of it possessed are becoming recognised; this and the knowledge "it can never happen again" is attracting the attention of collectors of artistic handiwork.

The best period was a good deal later than those of furniture, porcelain, pottery and glass, though the manufactures overlapped, and this may be one cause of its tardy recognition. Besides this, we must remember that the industries mentioned at no time laboured under the contemptuous disregard that papier-mâché had to endure.

The time has now come, when any kind of original and extinct workmanship should be collected and preserved according to its merits. Never again will it be practicable to squander time in hand methods which, having taken years to acquire, were infinitely slow and inexact as compared with machine-made results.

One practical merit of the old hand-made furniture is standing it in good stead: *it was made to last*. It would seem to be one of the advantages of leisurely methods, and we cannot be too grateful to the slow but sure workman.

Some of the best furniture is almost as good as new, but this remark seldom applies to tea-trays, which—apart from the ordinary wear and tear—had to undergo frequent trials by burning that would have put salamanders to the test.

The object of this book is to gather together what information is available, so as to give a starting

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point from which anyone wishing to collect intelligently, may begin his excursions into the bye-ways of the subject. I am fully conscious of the incompleteness of my information in several important directions, and ask for the patience and tolerance of those who may be better equipped.

I think the study of papier-mâché should begin with a careful examination of a few objects brought together haphazard and of various qualities. A little time spent in this way will enable anyone to recognise and discard the florid finery of the decadent period. Articles of this period will not bear looking into, neither for design, quality of material or workmanship, and one can hardly make a mistake.

Having excluded the bad, one should try and form a comparative estimate of the better articles. For this, nothing is more useful than tray borders. If one can muster a few trays and concentrate on a few inches of the border of each one, a valuable amount of knowledge will be acquired. The recognition of good gold work may be obtained in this way, and thus a useful start made.

Pearl work should be examined in the same way by attention to minor details; the sense of touch here assisting the eye. Some indication as to the date of the work may be got by observation on the lines laid down in the chapter on pearl ornament.

The material itself should be looked at—the back of a tray preferably to the front—and anything like a texture on the surface taken to indicate the quality as not being of the best.

For appraising the value of painted flowers and

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scenery no rules can be laid down; one must rely on one's artistic sense.

The search for a type or style is interesting, and it is surprising how often one has the satisfaction of coming across links connecting different pieces one knows. Help may occasionally be got from family records. A tea-tray must have been a frequent wedding present in our mothers' or grandmothers' day, and perhaps the donor—and possibly the place of origin—may be remembered. The period of a piece of work can be guessed at from the style and materials used in decoration, as well as the simplicity or otherwise of the form. These methods appear to me the best ones by which we can get most useful knowledge of papier-mâché, and be able to classify examples which we encounter.

G.D.

Leamington,
October, 1925.

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CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF PAPIER-MÂCHÉ

PAPIER-MÂCHÉ was a French invention in the early part of the 18th century. From France it extended into adjacent countries as well as into England.

The industry, though not a very important one, was sufficient to attract the attention of Frederick the Great, who, finding a quantity of articles being imported into Germany, and having a keen eye to business as well as an admiration for all things French, established a factory for it in Berlin in 1765.¹

This factory flourished, at any rate for a time, but whether it was the ancestor of any of the German firms who sent papier-mâché goods to the London Exhibition of 1851 or not, it would be interesting to know.

Prosser tells us that the idea of mashing up and using paper was suggested by the large quantities of waste paper that accumulated as the result of the nightly collection of notices and posters that were

¹ "Birmingham Inventions" (Prosser).

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torn down every night to make room for fresh ones, in the city of Paris in the early part of the century.

Paper was not then made cheaply or on so large a scale as now, and the object was to find a further use for it after it had served its original purpose, by mashing it up in water and making use of the resulting pulp.

Small articles, such as snuff-boxes, trinket- and work-boxes were moulded or turned from the dried pulp, and probably were painted or decorated more or less artistically.

In turning over the oddments in curiosity shops one often comes across quaint objects in papier-mâché, and it is not unlikely that some of these had their origin in the early French workshops.

The manufacture came to Birmingham about the middle of the century, and in 1765 the Rev. T. H. Croker gave a detailed account of the pulp process which had been started in that city.

In the Sketchley and Adams Directory for 1770, we read that a Mr. Watson carried on the business of papier-mâché maker at 76, High Street, Birmingham.

This is practically the whole story of true papier-mâché, and it would no doubt have dropped out of remembrance, but for fortuitous circumstances through which the name was revived between 1830 and 1840, for another substance that had nothing in common with it except that paper entered into its composition.

So far had the material and its name been forgotten, that it is not even mentioned in the French

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technical "Dictionnaire des Arts et Manufac-turieres" until the 1875 supplement.¹

The great French dictionaries in the middle of the 19th century, either omit the name altogether or use it in a figurative sense implying extreme weakness, just as we might speak of "wet blotting-paper" or "chewed string."

In 1772, Henry Clay, japanner, of Birmingham, invented a material which had certain heat-resisting properties, that made it suitable for japanning or lacquering processes. The body of the material was made by pasting sheets of paper together, and the articles made from it were called "paper ware." Tea-trays were from the first a chosen outlet for the new material, and were thence called "paper trays."

Some fifty or sixty years of this paper ware manu-facture passed, by which time the trade had become an important and lucrative one in Birmingham and Wolverhampton. The most renowned makers of it, Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge, were with others hampered by the poor and inadequate description, "paper-ware," and revived for it the old name—papier-mâché.

From this account it is evident that the term "papier-mâché" is not an accurate name; the material was not *mâché* in Clay's process; but the name found favour, and it is this material that we mean nowadays when we speak of papier-mâché.

We learnt as children that paper was made from

¹ "Birmingham Inventions" (Prosser).

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rags. Like many other things taught us at that stage, we have since found the statement to be only partially true. The best paper was perhaps made from rags, but the demand for paper at the beginning of the 18th century had outstripped the supply of rags, and all kinds of things were experimented with for making paper.

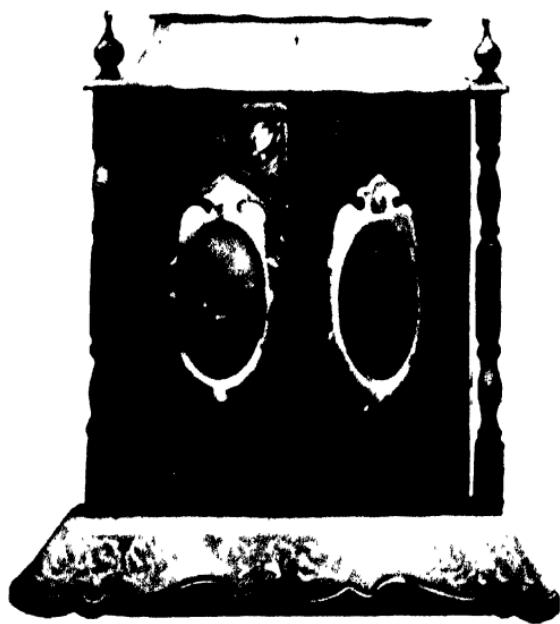
In looking through the patents taken out at this time, the acute necessity for finding a substitute is brought home to us. Extraordinary and varied lists of substances were suggested.

Hay and straw, hemp, flax, bark of trees, rope, nettles, sugar cane after the juice had been expressed, horse dung, leaves of pine apple, plantain, aloe, picis and cocoa plant, peat and bog asphodel were only a few of the suggestions included in patents. An inventive genius named Young advocated the growing of mangold wurtzles in large quantities, the juice of which was to be distilled into spirit, and the pulp made into paper. This patent was taken out in 1832, and is interesting as being the first in which we find the term "*papier-mâché*," after the long interval since 1765. A patent in 1838 was to make paper out of wood.

Whether or not paper was made from all these materials we shall never know, but they have another interest for us. From these vegetable matters, a substance called "*fibrous slab*" was made. Another name for it was *papier-mâché*, which name it had no right to, being in this instance *mâché*, but not *papier*.

This manufacture of fibrous slab was however

PLATE II.



L. Bellows—*Tuckson's Laces* (page 118).
Cabinet by *Charles A. Nichols*. Panels by *George Goodman*. (page 69.)

PLATE III.



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quite an impotent one. Of the long list of vegetable matters that could be used, hay, straw, nettles and tree bark probably afforded the most material. The body was light and tough, and, after being suitably moulded, well adapted for such uses as ceiling centres and cornices and wall mouldings. It could be glued, nailed or screwed together, and took the place of plaster of Paris moulding in many important buildings. Plaster of Paris had taken the place of the more expensive wood-carving, and now this so-called papier-mâché superceded plaster as being lighter, easily attached to a ceiling, and less liable to drop off.

The firms of Jackson and Son and Bielfeld, both of London, issued large illustrated catalogues of the uses to which the material could be put. When the House of Lords was rebuilt after the fire in 1834, the centre pieces and cornices of the ceiling and mouldings on the walls, were made of fibrous slab or papier-mâché. St. James' Palace, Chesterfield House, and the Grocers' Hall had ceilings of it. At the present day a similar coarse fibrous slab is moulded for dadoes and other house decorations. The inventors of fibrous slab or papier-mâché did not stop at ceilings and mouldings, but promised all sorts of extravagant uses for it. Furniture and carriages are conceivable, but they advertised using it for building boats, ships, bridges and houses. That houses were actually made of papier-mâché is, however, a fact. Under the fantastic heading of "A papier-mâché Village," a number of the *Illustrated London News* in the year 1853, had a picture of a village of ten cottages and a ten-roomed villa which

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was made by Bielfeld and exported to Australia in fulfilment of an order. It would be interesting to know its fate, and if aught survives after seventy years.

The enterprise soared rapidly, and one wonders what was actually attempted and what only written about. A personal recollection comes to memory in this connection. The writer remembers being told by his mother or nurse, when looking at a railway train, to him the embodiment of all that was strong and substantial, that railway carriages could be made of paper and the wheels out of glass. There may have been some germ of truth in this, but it is another instance in which startling information conveyed to youth, might well have been qualified by explanation. A patent was taken out in 1841 by one Taylor, for making railway carriage wheels of papier-mâché *instead of wood*. Fibrous slab or so-called papier-mâché has been much used in railway carriage wheels since the spokes of the wheels have been covered in on the artillery wheel principle. It has been found that filling the intervals between the spokes and covers with tightly packed fibrous pulp, reduces rattling to a minimum.

CHAPTER II

CLAY'S INVENTION

THE patent taken out by Henry Clay, of 19, Newhall Street, Birmingham, in 1772, was the beginning of the papier-mâché in which we are interested.

Henry Clay in early life had been apprenticed to the well-known japanner, John Baskerville¹; and in later life, when as a celebrated man he decorated panels for Queen Charlotte's sedan chair, he also supplied papier-mâché panels to Baskerville's coach.

The japanning trade had been brought to Wolverhampton from Pontypool in 1720, and to Birmingham rather later. Among other things japanners sought to make and decorate, were articles after the style of Japanese and Chinese lacquer or lac work.

English japanners, however, worked at a disadvantage. The Orientals had a native product in the shape of a tree, which gave them a fundamental advantage over their European competitors.

This tree, when the bark was punctured by a certain parasite—the coccus lacca, of the same family as the cochineal—emitted a juice in great

¹ Prosser.

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quantity. This juice had the valuable property of setting hard in the sun without the aid of artificial heat. This was a vital advantage when used for varnishing or lacquering purposes; inasmuch as the natives of the East were able to use wood as the body of their beautiful fabrications in lacquer, the surface drying by natural sun heat without the necessity of stoving. English japanners were debarred from the use of wood; their varnishes and lacquers required stoving, and this caused wood (if used) to warp or crack.

That was the position of things—the japanners required some new material of which to make their japanned articles. Iron they had, but as yet not tin plates; and Clay it was who found a suitable body by pasting together sheets of paper.

A substantial body obtained in this way could be brought to a fine surface for polishing, and could then be decorated and stoved as much as was required, without being injuriously affected by the heat.

Clay's invention was for making in paper *high varnished panels or roofs for coaches, all sorts of wheeled carriages and Sedan chairs, panels for rooms, doors, and "cabbins" of ships, cabinets, bookcases, screens, chimney-pieces, tables, tea-trays, and waiters.*

It cannot be too clearly emphasised that this list is governed by the words "panels for"; the new material was intended to be used for decorative purposes.

Clay may have seen real papier-mâché made

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from paper pulp while serving his apprenticeship, and may have noticed that the surfaces made by this means were not satisfactory, and would not give the highly varnished smoothness required. Inequalities in the density of the pulped material prevented the formation of a smooth homogeneous surface, and were liable to show up after the article was finished.

Clay's process was simply pasting sheets of paper one over another on wood or metal cores, until a sufficient thickness was obtained, and then removing the core.

The paper used in the process—called in the trade "making" paper—was a special line confined to two or three paper-makers. Greenish grey in colour, it was not so smooth as good blotting paper, and rather thicker and tougher. The paper was made from rags, but not necessarily from cotton and linen rags alone. Old bags and sacking formed a not inconsiderable proportion of its substance. On the other hand woollen rags were carefully excluded, for it was found that these perished in the stoving, causing dents and irregularities to appear in the body after its final polish. An old papier-mâché tea-tray, broken by much use, often shows the material at the damaged spot; there it looks like flakey gingerbread; but if one dissects it up a little the greenish grey paper is quite evident and the sheets can even be counted.

As regards this paper and its cost, Aitken,¹ writing in 1866, puts it at £25 a ton. Towards the end of the life of papier-mâché, namely, about 1806,

¹ "The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham." 1866. W. C. Aitken.

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the price was £90 a ton, and a recent offer to supply a specially manufactured lot of five tons was at £95 a ton.

For making a papier-mâché panel, only a flat metal or wooden plate was required on which to dress the sheets. The plate having been lubricated, a sheet was laid on smoothly and painted over with a mixture of glue, flour and resin. Another sheet was then laid on and smoothed, before plate and sheets were put in a drying stove. A perfectly smooth surface was made by rasping and pumice-stoning before other sheets were put on, and it was largely owing to this careful smoothing between the different layers, that the body became homogeneous and the surface capable of receiving such a high polish.

Ten sheets made a substantial panel, and after all were put on and stoved, the last and most particular levelling and smoothing took place. A great deal of rubbing and polishing with chamois leather—mostly done by girls—completed the process, and the panel was ready for its black coat. Lamp black, Virginia turpentine, balsams, drying oils, pitch, resin and wax are among the agents required for the highly technical operation of japanning.

When the panel was to take a more definite shape, as for instance for a tea-tray with ornamental edges, the sheets were brought over the edges and moulded on the core by hand; such a core would have to be of metal, as no wood could be relied on to go through the stove without warping.

This was, briefly, the process invented and practised by Clay in 1772, and although other methods

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were used from time to time, it was never improved upon as regards quality of body and surface through the hundred and odd years that papier-mâché was made. A simplification was introduced about half-way through this period, but the best articles continued to be thus made.

A panel made of sheets laid on flat was the simplest form of papier-mâché, and required only care and experience in the making. At a later date different shapes in trays—some of them quite complicated—called for much skill and dexterity in getting the irregular outlines properly shaped. These shapes were done by hand, a bow-saw only being used for cutting out indentations before the edges were softened for hand moulding.

Japanners had been seeking for such a material, namely, one that was homogeneous in substance, smooth and capable of taking a high polish and unaffected by heat.

This new material, which for convenience we call papier-mâché (though the name had not then been revived, and Clay called it "paper"), had come to hand in an old industry that had been going on for fifty years or more, and had thus had time to fix its methods. The introduction of this new medium helped to raise the standard of decoration on japanned goods, which was destined to become highly artistic.

Clay started with panels, then he made tea-trays, and how far beyond this he went is uncertain. Various articles are mentioned as coming from his works in Birmingham and made of papier-mâché,

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but we can confidently say that they were not made but only decorated with papier-mâché panels. Plain-edged trays, such as Clay began with, were nothing but panels with the edges turned up and folded over a core which was shaped like a shallow baking-pan.

Two firms of japanners are mentioned in the Birmingham Trade Directory for 1805 as being "paper-tray makers," one of them being Chopping and Bill, who had succeeded to Clay's business. Clay left Birmingham in 1802 and retired to King Street, Covent Garden, where sixty years later his business was still in existence.

Henry Clay had been very successful. From his japanning and papier-mâché workshops he made a handsome fortune. We are not permitted to know what were the relative parts these two played in providing the fortune. We are told¹ that he made a profit of over three pounds on a tea tray, so trays must have cost more than they do now.

Clay became High Sheriff of Warwickshire in 1790, and among other enterprising acts he presented a Sedan chair and a pair of consol tables to Queen Charlotte, of which the panels were of papier-mâché painted by Guido. Messrs. Small and Son, Guest, Chopping and Bill had already in 1780 begun to make papier-mâché panels and perhaps tea-trays, and at a later date their business led them to make these in blank, to be decorated by other japanners.

The Birmingham Directory of 1805 mentions tables, cabinets, tea-trays, "caddees," panels for doors, Sedan chairs and snuff-boxes as being made

¹ Aitken.

PLATE IV.



Card Tray. Jones's Marbling. (page 121.)
2. Card Tray. Clay. (page 33.)

PLATE V.



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by this firm; it no doubt refers to panels for these articles, which they made and decorated.

Directions to workers issued by Clay state that the material can be sawn, turned and chiselled like wood, and that nails and screws can be used on it.

According to Aitken, as many as three hundred men were working for Clay at one time. It would be still more interesting if he had told us how they were divided between the two branches and what was the output of papier-mâché from his works.

It is a difficulty we have to face in getting facts about the industry during the hundred years or rather more than it went on, that it is inextricably mixed up with japanning. There were always a considerable number of firms so engaged, perhaps 35 in 1800 and 80 in 1850, between the two towns of Birmingham and Wolverhampton. How many of these japanners made papier-mâché, how many of them decorated ready-made panels, and how many dabbled in it at all, we shall never know. In the vigorous days of papier-mâché, about 1840, some japanners were starred in the Directory as making it, and a few years later some firms were starred as being only japanners.

It is fairly certain that, for nearly fifty years after Clay's invention, nothing much was attempted in papier-mâché but panels and trays. The standard of decoration, however, became higher and higher, and quite a number of artists trained themselves by painting for japanners. Clay had good painters working for him, some of whom developed into

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recognised artists; workmen who had talent occasionally raising themselves to this position. Ordinary tea-trays made by Clay—not those specially designed by artists and likely to receive tender treatment—were substantial articles, and many have stood the usage of years and are still in good condition. The larger ones have stood the best; perhaps the smaller were more used. They are fairly heavy, as they should be, and are lacking in the highly varnished black background that became such a feature. Nevertheless, the surface is sound and has protected the painting on them in some cases better than that of trays made fifty years later. The decoration is restrained and in good taste, and will be considered with other styles of early decoration.

CHAPTER III

PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

PARTICULARS of patents taken out from Henry Clay's onwards, give a good idea of the stages through which papier-mâché passed in rising to the high standard in craftsmanship to which it attained. The apex of high quality might be placed arbitrarily about 1850, or about midway in point of time between the modest beginning and the ignoble termination. The causes of the decline and extinction of the industry will be traced later.

In 1772 Henry Clay, of Newhall Street, Birmingham, took out a patent for *making in paper high varnished panels or roofs for coaches, all sorts of wheeled carriages and Sedan chairs, panels for rooms, doors, and "cabbins" of ships, cabinets, bookcases, screens, chimney pieces, tables, tea-trays and waiters by pasting several papers upon boards or plates of regular thickness on each side of the same to prevent one side contracting or drawing in drying . . . until board appears of sufficient thickness . . . taken off such plates . . . stoved . . . oil or varnish for protecting from damp.* Details are given as to how the material can be joineder like wood.

In 1786 I. Skidmore, of Clerkenwell, patented a method of decorating japan ware, cabinets and

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furniture of paper, with metal foils, stones, Bristol stones, paint, all kinds of "pinched" and other glass and compositions suitable to the jewellery trade (an unnecessary bit of irony by the patentee regarding an honourable trade).

Holes were to be punctured and the glass or stone stuck in with varnish or cement. This decoration was applicable to furniture, roofs of coaches, etc. The frequent mention of ornaments for roofs of coaches and Sedan chairs, suggests that there was a special demand for some suitable way of doing these.

The *inlay* of glass and stones, sometimes set over metallic foil, was the forerunner of the so-called *gem inlay*, for which a patent was taken out some sixty years later.

In 1812 Thomas Hubball, of Clerkenwell, invented a *method of ornamenting japan and paper ware, metal, leather, and plaster articles*.

The process, set out at length, was briefly the sizing over of a surface and using metallic ore in powder strewn over it, instead of pigment. This idea resulted in a series of pictures in bronzes which were characteristic of the times and will be described later.

In 1819 Charles Valentine, of Clerkenwell, invented a *new method of ornamenting and painting japanned and varnished wares of metal, paper, and other compositions*. The object was to produce a gilded or painted landscape or figure. The process briefly was as follows: Four plates of copper, each the size of the picture to be produced, are

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called Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4. No. 1 is etched with lines or stippling representing the highest lights in the picture. In No. 2 the etching deals with the somewhat lower tones. No. 3 takes the next down the scale, and No. 4 the darkest shades.

An ink, of strong burnt linseed oil and Frankfort blue is painted over No. 4. A little flake white is added to the ink before painting No. 3, a further addition of white for No. 2, and pure white for No. 1. A sheet of tissue paper well prepared with a thick coating of gum arabic, is damped and laid on No. 4 and gently pressed down. The paper is then pressed on Nos. 3, 2, and 1 successively, each impression, however, being given a week to dry.

A thick coat of copal varnish is laid on, and forms a body from which, when the paper is washed off, impressions are taken.

These three inventions by Clerkenwell men show that this district was well to the fore in the industry, even to the extent of forestalling the Birmingham and Wolverhampton japanners, who had previously had the lead. Birmingham had more than thirty workshops working at it, and Wolverhampton had had nearly a hundred years to develop.

The inventions are described as applicable to the paper trade, but this rather understates the case. We find indeed metallic bronze, jewel inlay and colour transfer which are the processes referred to, forming much of the best decoration of papier-mâché. These styles were popular before flower painting came in, and still remained so in spite of the great attention paid to this branch.

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In 1825 Aaron Jennens and T. H. Betteridge obtained a patent for *certain improvements in preparing and working pearl shell into various forms, for applying it to ornamental uses in the manufacture of paper and other wares.*

Two processes are described, the first for preparing pearl shell by reducing it to the necessary thinness by mechanical methods, and the second for cutting out the thinned shell by means of corrosive acids.

The first process involves filing, grinding and rubbing with pumice, pieces of flat shell until they are reduced to a thickness of only $1/100$ to $1/40$ of an inch. This was a long and tedious business, and was mostly done by boys and girls. There were two kinds of pearl shell. One of them, flat like an oyster shell, was of greenish colour, and the other, shaped like a snail, was pink. This latter was called "aurora" shell. Neither of them was mother-of-pearl. A more or less flat piece of a giant sea snail or nautilus shell was cut out with nippers and given to one of the hands. Laying it on a flat surface, he filed and ground first one side and then the other till it was quite flat, and continued further rubbing till it was sufficiently thin. Sometimes the pearl was stuck down with wax, to be filed and rubbed. At a rather later period a revolving wheel was made to do the rubbing, the workman holding the pearl pieces against the wheel with the palm of his hand, protected with a piece of corduroy. As the laminæ of pearl became thinner and thinner, more care was required in the handling, and when finished it could be blown about like a bit of paper.

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When the pearl had been thus thinned down to a thickness varying from $1/100$ to $1/40$ of an inch, the cutter was able to cut out the design required with a penknife or scissors, though he no doubt had his special tools. A good deal of time must have been lost through small mishaps in the process.

The method of separating pearl by eating away portions by acid that are not required, became a useful auxiliary to pearl cutting, and for some kinds of work superseded the cutting process.

The press tool, a kind of stamp, produced those more complicated and irregular shapes one often finds repeated over and over again in the same article. Instances of this appear in Plate 14, Fig. 1.

The process by acid consisted in painting over with asphaltum or other "stopping-out" substance, the thinned out piece of shell, the paint covering that part of the surface it was intended to preserve. When the strong hydrochloric acid was afterwards brushed over the surface, it ate into and dissolved out the pearl not protected, leaving the pattern which was covered by asphaltum, intact.

No doubt many variations were made in the details of shaping pearl pieces by means of acid, but the pearl cutter and grinder was still at work when the industry closed. Another method, consisting of sticking a number of flat pieces of pearl together and then cutting out patterns with a band saw, should be mentioned.

Rounded parts of the shell, called knuckles, were chipped off the flat parts and sometimes used as convex projections on the ornamented surface.

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The usual result is not very satisfactory, though some bordering lines of small projecting pieces are passable.

Pearl shell applied to papier-mâché is often spoken of as pearl inlay. It is, however, not inlaid in any sense, but applied and attached by adhesives. The perfectly level surface of a finished article, is got by laying on coat after coat of transparent varnish, and rubbing by hand with stone or leather till pearl and all are the same dead level. Transparent paint was generally brushed over pearl when the pieces were of any size and when the style of ornament permitted; the pearl adding iridescence to the colour, was very effective in flower decoration.

Pearl grinding and working was quite a large industry in Birmingham, irrespective of the japanning trade. Buttons, studs, counters, knife- and walking-stick handles were some of the stock uses for it before papier-mâché came in to double the demand. Mother-of-pearl as well as pearl shell was ground for the larger articles, it was sometimes used for papier-mâché, but not on work of the best quality.

The writer was told by an old pearl-worker that when pearl handles for walking-sticks went out of fashion, it seemed as if the death-blow had been given to the trade.

In 1839, J. F. Saunders obtained a patent for *improvements in certain descriptions of paper, papier-mâché, etc., capable of being produced from paper pulp.* No specification is attached to this patent, so it is impossible to say what he proposed to do.

PLATE VI.

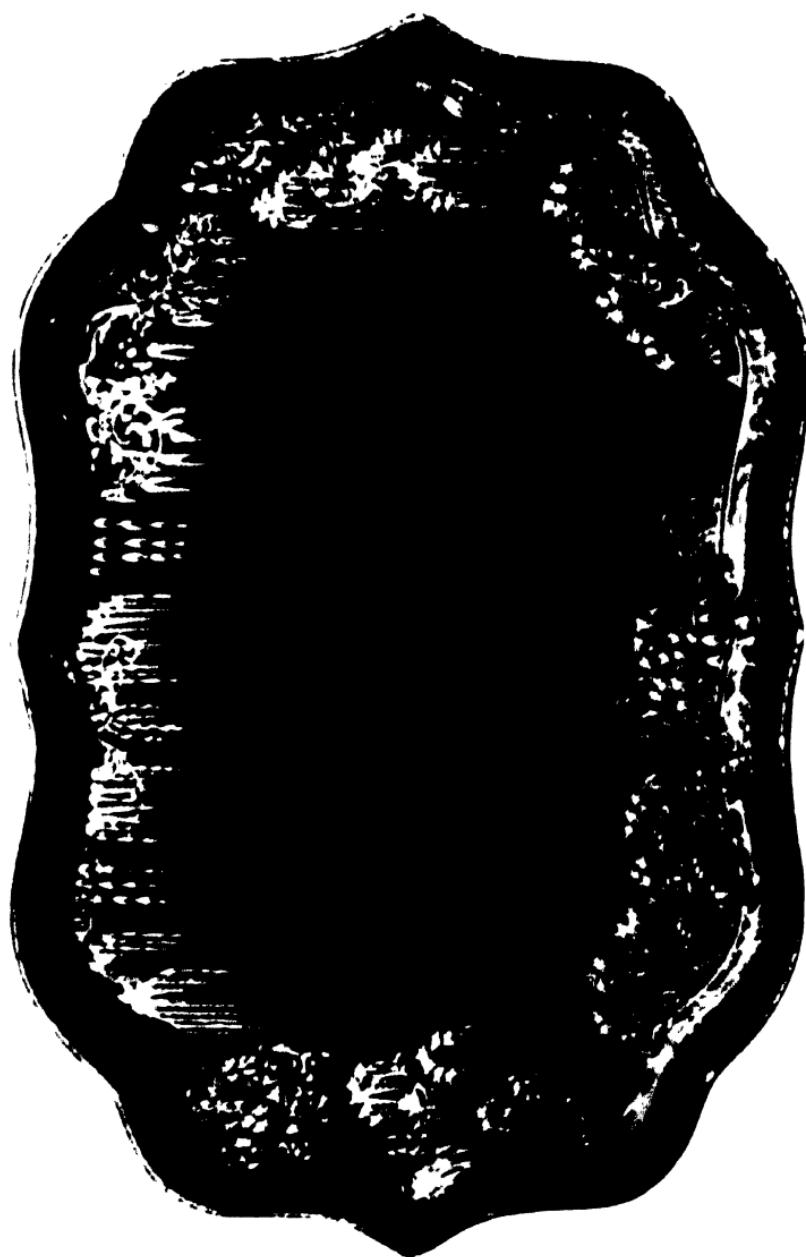
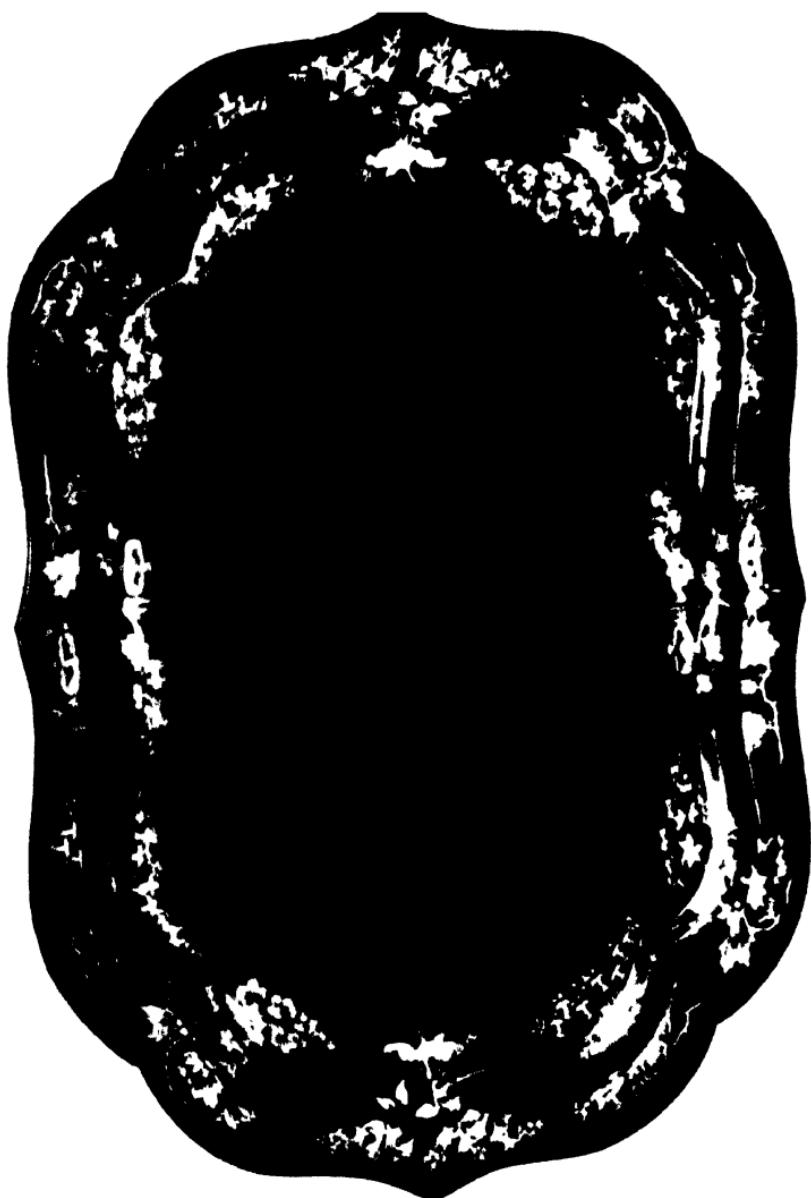


PLATE VI.

PLATE VII.



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Inventors realized what an advantage it would be if the process of pasting paper sheets together could be done away with.

Pulp of various kinds was pressed and moulded into papier-mâché articles from time to time, but for reasons already mentioned the processes never succeeded in giving such satisfactory results as the paper method.

A person with a little experience can tell from a glance at the surface whether pulp or sheets have been used. Had the pulp-makers confined themselves to prepared *paper*, pulped, it might have been different; as it was, the fibrous materials being of different densities and the body therefore not strictly homogeneous, inequalities made themselves evident after the article had received its final coat of varnish.

In 1843, J. C. Haddon, of King's Cross, patented an *improved mode of manufacture of papier-mâché and other articles made of vegetable pulp by combining successive layers of wet pulp by winding them round a cylinder until the required thickness was obtained . . . cutting . . . pressing and drying flat*. The same remarks apply to this as to the last invention.

In 1844, Thomas Farmer, of Birmingham, took out a patent for *certain improved methods of ornamenting papier-mâché and in the manufacture and ornamentation of japanned goods generally*. (1) By transferring to the said goods patterns printed on paper from copper plates. (2) By ornamenting papier-mâché and japanned goods by electrical and galvanic agency. (3) Attaching such

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ornament. (4) Embossing and producing designs in relief on papier-mâché.

By the first process, the pattern to be conveyed to paper from a copper plate is brushed over with an oily composition, not soluble in water. The surface of the article to be decorated is covered with gold leaf attached by size. The paper bearing the pattern is laid on and damped, gentle friction causing the impression to pass on to the gilt surface. The paper being removed and the surface dry, the surplus gold leaf is removed by gentle friction, the loss of the transfer being prevented by the composition.

In (2) and (3) a thin stratum of copper is deposited on a gold tracing by electro-plating methods.

In (4) directions are given for producing ornament in relief. Wax is moulded to the size and shape of the relief required. This having been covered with an attractive medium (graphite), an electro-copper deposit is made on it; this deposit is continued until a sheath of copper of the correct size and shape results. The wax is now withdrawn and the hollow copper mould filled up with pulp, whitening, glue and shellac. This core is then taken from the copper mould and attached to the design in relief.

Farmer also introduced electro-plated metal in combination with papier-mâché. Metal plates and edges of filagree, finished in this way, were attached to papier-mâché trays and salvers.

A much greater bid for popularity by electro-plate over papier-mâché, took place about twenty

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years later, when plating had reached a further stage in development.

In 1845, William Brindley, of Twickenham, obtained a patent for *improvements in manufacturing trays and various articles of japan and other wares of pulp.*

The novelty in this patent was to press pulp into sheets, after the water had been squeezed out between layers of wire cloth.

Pulp was also pressed into hollow or sunk moulds; the solid ornament thus made resembled wood carving. A process of this kind is in use at the present day, but the moulded masses are now turned out hollow; they are used for dado mouldings, etc., by house decorators.

In 1847, Theodore Hyla Jennens, of Birmingham, patented *improved methods of manufacturing papier-mâché articles and a new and improved method of ornamenting papier-mâché articles applicable also for ornamenting purposes generally.*

There was a good deal of novelty in these inventions which had considerable influence on the progress of the industry. The first part was for manufacturing "blanks" out of "panel." By "panel" here was understood paper board composed of sheets of the same sort of making paper as generally used, but the sheets, instead of being stuck together, one by one, on the article in process of making, were now to be massed together in definite thickness by the paper-makers using their own processes. Time and labour would thus be saved in the workshops. The panel was about a sixth to a quarter of an inch thick, and made by

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rolling sheets together with adhesive media. To a large extent the former system was superseded by this one, and many shops gave up entirely the lengthy method with its hand smoothing and frequent stovings. Panel was made in one thickness, and one, two, or three layers were used according to the object made. The best work was still done by the hand sheet process, and some of the older skilled men would use no other. Hand-made panel of the same thickness is rather heavier than paper-makers' panel; this can be easily tested by lifting and comparing a few old trays. Something like a texture can generally be made out by examining the back of a panel-made tray in oblique light.

It is not to be wondered at that makers took advantage of this time-saving invention, and confined themselves to decorating "blanks" made of panel, and moulded according to the second part of this patent.

The other clause in T. H. Jennens' patent dealt with softening the panel by means of steam and thus rendering it pliable and ready to be put into a heated metal mould, on which a similarly heated stamp would then be screwed down. Stamps and moulds were heavy massive affairs, so made as to retain the heat for a long time; some were constructed so as to be continuously heated after the panel was put in. When moulded and dried in this way, panel retained its shape permanently.

Hand-made panel could be moulded in the same way as maker's panel. This would be of special advantage for a tea-tray with ornamental edges—quite doing away with the lengthy thumb work. In

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the wording of the patent, emphasis is laid on the necessity for the mould and stamp to be kept at the same relative distance apart throughout the pattern, and giving diagrams showing how paper sheets would suffer if this was not observed.

The patent further included a method for ornamenting papier-mâché by the application of glass-gems, jewels real and fictitious, pearls, glass cut, "quicked" or otherwise, paste, enamel, coloured or marbled wax, ivory, tortoiseshell, steel and other beads, and glass beads called pearl beads (Plate 9, Fig. 3).

Mr. Jennens says: "Sometimes I apply beads, etc., to the papier-mâché and sometimes to plates of glass or talc or other transparent substances, and afterwards insert the said plates in the papier-mâché articles. Sometimes I insert the glass, gems, etc., before the papier-mâché is varnished, in suitable cavities in the papier-mâché and varnish over, and sometimes I insert the said gems, etc., in papier-mâché articles after the same have been finished; in the last case secured in cavities by varnish or cement. Glass, gems, etc., on exposed surfaces are flat and flush, while the backs are cut or polished into a number of reflecting surfaces.

"In using glass, gems, etc., where the upper surfaces are convex or plain, I sometimes cover them with a glass or talc plate. Sometimes I attach said glass, gems, etc., in relief or project. Sometimes I apply foil to the back of glass, gems, etc. When I apply said glass, gems, etc., to plates of glass or talc I proceed as follows: I first ornament

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the under-side of plates by painting, enamel or gilding, leaving blank spaces where it is intended to apply glass, gems, etc., and afterwards attach in any convenient manner such glass, gems, etc., to those parts of plates which have been left blank for the purpose. Instead of ornamenting the back of the glass plate before attaching glass, gems, etc., thereto, I sometimes first apply the said glass, gems, etc., and afterwards paint, enamel or gild ornament on the said plate of glass or talc."

Skidmore, in 1786, seems to have anticipated this invention.

In 1848 William Brindley, of Birmingham, obtained a patent for (1) *Producing ornament in relief on papier-mâché.* (2) *Manufacturing hollow vessels in papier-mâché capable of holding fluids.* (3) *Hats.*

Pulp was used for these inventions. Moulds for the inside and outside of hollow vessels having been made, pulp was pressed in and allowed to harden. The vessels and bowls made in this way were light in weight and strong, and often took the place of metallic vessels. The moulds themselves could be made of papier-mâché. The ornaments in relief referred to, were solid moulded masses resembling wood carving.

Hats were a novelty; "bowlers" and "top" hats were made with brims complete in the same way as the hollow vessels. One would like to know whether they were at all comfortable and popular. The shiny black hats affected by the London cabbies

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and often portrayed in "Punch," in the sixties and seventies were sometimes made of papier-mâché.

In 1849 William Brindley took out yet another patent, for *producing ornamental designs in papier-mâché*. For this he used panel board. The surface of the panel is well oiled and leaves or plant specimens are laid on it, followed by sheets of wet paper, as many as required to obtain the thickness. The whole is then clamped together and stoved, after which the impression of the flowers remain on the paper surface. Positives in relief could be obtained from this negative.

In 1851 James Souter and James Worton, of Birmingham, took out a patent for *improvements in manufacturing papier-mâché and articles made therefrom, and in the manufacture of buttons, studs other articles where metal or glass were used*.

The improvement in manufacture consisted of using a mixture of lamp black or white lead with bookbinders paste, with which to colour the surface after the panel was finished.

Buttons made by stamping out discs from panel had been in use before, the holes being drilled by a separate process. This patent gives directions for using punches to drill holes as part of the process by which buttons were stamped out. A further direction was for forming a recess in the back of each disc, for the reception of a strengthening plate of metal. These processes were all effected at one operation by the use of a fly-press.

By this patent buttons of papier-mâché were sometimes *inlaid with mother-of-pearl, or pearl*

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shell and metal. To simulate a projecting jewel, fluid glass was pressed through holes from underneath.

While on this subject, it is worth noting that papier-mâché buttons must have been largely used, for a great number were made. They were originally called paper buttons, and sheets of panel from which they were stamped were supplied by paper-makers. In order to avoid paying the licence fee that was required for selling paper and paper wares, button-makers came to use button boards—which were strips of panel from the makers, of just the width required for stamping out discs. The name was given as “button boards” instead of paper board.

Specimens of buttons, sometimes inlaid with pearl, that one comes across are not very beautiful. Quite a long time must have been occupied making each one, though they give the impression of crudity and no evidence of clever workmanship. Perhaps the writer has been unfortunate in meeting only common examples.

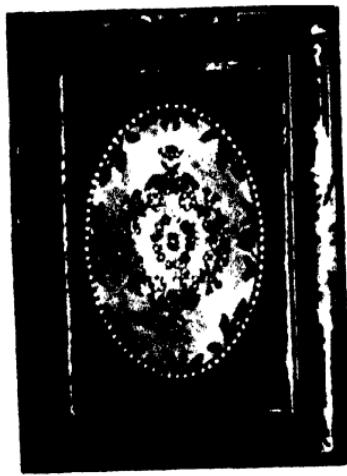
In 1852 George Goodman, of Birmingham, obtained a patent for *ornamenting japanned and papier-mâché wares by transferring thereto designs printed upon paper; the said designs being painted in oil colours from engraved plates.*

Morland, Landseer, and Birket Foster were the artists whose pictures were mostly reproduced upon papier-mâché. In the case of the first two, the copies were often on paper and stuck on to articles of various qualities. In the case of the landscapes, the copy was more often painted on the papier-



1. Paper Racks. Flower painted. *Jennens & Bettridge.* 2. Tea Tray. *George
Vernon*. (page 86.) 3. Card Tray. *Hammon.* (page 86.) 4. Card Tray.

PLATE IX.



1 & 2. Pair Hand Screens. *Altager*. (page 95.)
3. Blotter. Gem Inlay. (page 95.)
4. Bellows. Pearl and Gold.

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mâché surface, and the finish of the article prepared for its reception, very much better.

George Goodman himself was a considerable artist, his pictures of church interiors being among the most noteworthy of that style. A cabinet (Plate 2, Fig. 2) by Chas. Neville has panels painted by Goodman. It was a curious freak of his that made him paint pictures under the name of Foley, whilst retaining his own name for every other purpose.

There were two Goodmans—brothers—both of whom had been apprentices to Jennens and Bettridge. The other, John by name, was employed afterwards by Tearne and Richardson.

Some of the details of these patents may appear unimportant and trivial, and afford rather tedious reading, but a good general idea of the stages by which development took place in the industry may be gathered from them. Articles are seldom marked, and we have to rely on details of their fashion and ornament, to give us a clue as to their age and origin.

An invention was made in 1846 by Thomas Gibson¹ which differs slightly from that patented the following year by T. H. Jennens. In the process the decoration is executed in gold or colour on glass, sometimes having spaces under which pearl is to be introduced. The pearl is untouched or glazed with transparent varnish colour which allows the iridescence to shine through. After attaching the pearl to the glass by cement, the slab is backed

¹ Aitken.

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up and let into the lid of a desk, dressing case, fire-screen, etc. Coloured foils, or plain metallic foils, were sometimes let in behind glass in imitation of this ornament (Plate 9, Fig. 5).

In 1853 an invention of mechanical gold was recorded. It is needless to say this was not gold leaf or beaten gold, for so long ago as King Solomon's temple this had been known. Mechanical gold was probably some alloy of a slightly different tint, and similar to the so-called Dutch metal or Dutch gold. Mr. Breese is credited with this invention.

In 1864 following on the reduction in cost of aluminium¹ consequent on the experiments by Clair Deville (which resulted in Messrs. Ball, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, entering largely into the manufacture), Mr. J. Bettridge, late of Jennens and Bettridge—applied that metal and bronze formed from it, to the decoration of trays, albums, stationery cases, etc.

In 1855 Waltons, of Wolverhampton, put on the market papier-mâché trays with glass bottoms. There may be some of these still in existence, but the number made was not great, and they are not often met with.

These patents and inventions are the principal ones that occurred in the first seventy-five years—the development period of papier-mâché—before the decline set in.

The first fifty years produced but three patented inventions: the rest followed in the succeeding

¹ Aitken.

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twenty-five years. These were the finest years in the history of papier-mâché, during which, under the leadership of Jennens and Bettridge, a high standard of artistic merit, supported by excellent craftsmanship, made a permanent place for papier-mâché in the history of decorative arts.

Jennens and Bettridge did more than anyone else in raising the craft towards the level of art. It would be wrong, however, to give them all the credit. They did more of the best work than any other firm; but, as in the case of Chippendale and Wedgwood in their respective trades, work was done by some of their contemporaries, that was not excelled by the master firms.

CHAPTER IV

DECORATION. CLAY'S

ONE of the earliest records of ornament on papier-mâché after Clay's invention, is that in which the inventor had panels painted by the artist Guido, for insertion into the Sedan chair and consol tables which he presented to Queen Charlotte. Simpler forms of painting were no doubt the rule for panels and trays at this time, as more suited to the requirements of ordinary customers.

Japanned trays were the forerunners of papier-mâché or paper trays (as Clay and others called them), and it followed that the form of decoration used on iron trays was carried on. Plain geometrical design in two or three shades was one of the earliest ornaments. A tea-tray of Clay's (Plate 3) is of different character. The shape, oblong with plain straight-edged sides, is quite characteristic of his earlier trays, as is the decoration in leaves and flowers.

On a dark, but not highly varnished, black background, are large mop-like heads of flowers and leaves, which may represent chrysanthemums, covering almost the entire surface. The details of the foliage are carried out in three shades of yellow and greenish yellow bronze, all, even the smallest details of flowers and leaves are most precisely and carefully painted. The yellow bronze stalks and

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outlines were originally gold coloured, and have become dimmed with time as the metallic particles in the bronze tarnished.

A companion tray has similar colouring, but the design is even more elaborate, while being just as full of detail, with masses of bamboo and palm and pampas grass and a few butterflies. There is no attempt at naturalistic colour, the butterflies and grasses being in the same shades of yellow and green. Both trays show the same careful painting and elaborate details, and with their subdued and blended bronze tints, give a very pleasing effect.

Trays like this, i.e., of paper sheets and substantial body, are rather heavy, the weight of course varying with the thickness. It is not until we come to trays made from panel, that much difference in weight is noticed.

A small round card-tray is also by Clay (Plate 4, Fig. 2). Unlike the two large ones, it has a highly glazed black surface with flowers, leaves, and butterflies in two shades of gold. The leaf shapes on this small tray and the tea-trays are so closely alike, as to lead one to feel sure they are by the same hand.

CHAPTER V

DECORATION. EARLY BRONZE

FOLLOWING Hubball's patent in 1812, bronze became a favourite medium, with a process and character quite peculiar to itself.

In the process of making a bronze picture, no pigment or brushes were used, coloured bronzes in powder form being strewn directly on the picture.

In place of brushes, swabs or "bobs" (the workshop name)—often made of wool or cotton waste wrapped round a stick handle—mixed and dabbed the powder about as required. Other "bobs" were made of chamois leather, and very small ones, consisted of an atom of leather tied on a fine string, which passed up the hollow of a quill, drew the leather up to form a tiny pad at the end of the quill. Fine hard lines and delicate shading could be done by a skilful workman with these odd appliances.

A workman engaged in bronze work, would have on his bench a shallow box or tray in which were hollowed out twelve to eighteen cup-like cavities, each about the size of half an egg, and each holding a powder of distinctive colour. These powders were either ground up metal, or metallic ores in natural colour or stained by chemical means; the metals being brass, copper, zinc, silver, gold and Dutch

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metal in different and various alloys. Metallic powder gave the sparkle to the bronzes.

In making a picture, a portion of the surface which was to form the sky, was thickly smeared over with gold size, and yellow bronze was then powdered over it and worked in with a "bob." Before it dried, other shades were added. Where clouds were to be represented, a darker shade of powder would be strewn on, and for cloud linings or higher lights, powder of purer brass or mixed with silver would be strewn over it. As the powder sank in, it mixed with that already on the picture, so that patches blended imperceptibly.

Where masses of trees or shadows were to be, green bronze with, perhaps blacklead, gave the necessary sombreness.

A fold of flowing drapery would seem to be a difficult thing to carry out by these means, but it was managed. In such a case an under-layer of a dark colour was put on and when partly dry a red or brown colour for the drapery, was dusted over and allowed to settle a little before a "bob" was used to draw spiral lines to represent folds in shadow, the shadow effect being got by the lines going through to the deeper and darker shade. Where a hard straight line, as in Neptune's trident, was required, a piece of paper would be laid along the sized portion and the powder then spread over it would follow a clean sharp line. Elaborate pictures were done in this way with figures, buildings, boats, etc.; and one has to examine such a picture very minutely, to be convinced that it was not done with brushes in the ordinary way.

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A panel picture, "The Triumph of Britannia" (Plate 5) in this medium, is not only typical of the process, but of the heroic or patriotic subjects generally chosen. The makers were Illidge & Co., of Wolverhampton, and the date about 1818.

At that time Trafalgar and Waterloo were recent events, and a good deal of patriotism and perhaps a little swagger were not out of fashion. Having got rid of Napoleon the bogey—after years of anxiety—folks were satisfied with themselves and not averse to a little flattery.

The subject of this panel is dealt with in simple and decisive style, and all details are carried out carefully. Strong bronze colours lend themselves to the broad and heroic lines the allegory affects. The young woman, confident and not at all self-conscious, adapts herself to the surroundings of Neptune's chariot, which is made out of a giant sea-shell; holding his trident in one hand, she rests the other, which holds a palm, on a shield covered by the Union Jack. Neptune's face is rather dark, but is as good as anything in the picture with its expression of dog-like devotion. Neptune is minding the floundering conventional horses, while his triton of monstrous muscular development, winds a sea-conch as a horn. Overhead is the allegorical figure of Fame as an angel with a pair of trumpets; he is very elaborately worked out, even to the feathers on his wings.

The face, hands and feet of Britannia and torso of Fame are painted, as clearly seen in oblique light, all the rest being in coloured bronzes.

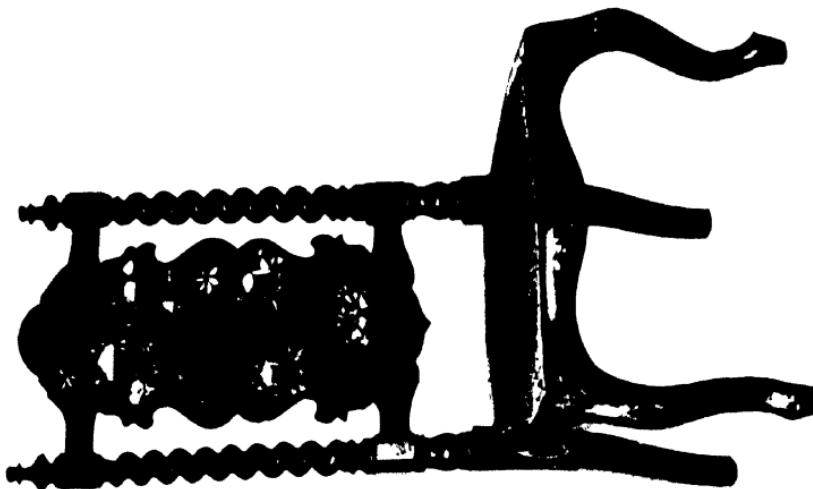
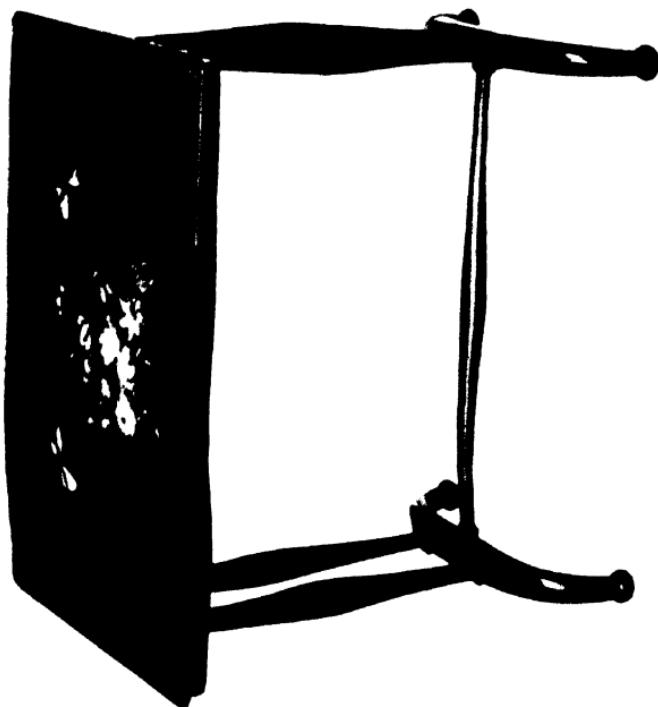
PLATE X.



Lea Tray. *Pin-ié M'e-al-nu*. (page 89.)

PLATE XI.

Table. Flowers, Pearl and Gold.



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Aitken mentions two pictures, "Goddess of Earth" and "Daniel in the Lions' Den," as being by Davis, a painter who also did rustic scenes after Morland. These bronze pictures on papier-mâché are some of the best of that type. Some really weird iron trays are to be met with in bronzes, picturing apocryphal beasts in furiously savage attitudes; it is impossible to say what they are, but they are realistically drawn. Entire pictures in bronzes gave way in favour of mixed ornament with bronze for sky and background. These skies remained in favour till quite the middle of the century. Another form of bronze was that made with aluminium. It came in much later, not till the sixties and seventies, which was after the disappearance of the golden bronzes. The silvery bronze from aluminium was pretty and effective, especially with flowers and foliage. It has no association with the early bronze pictures.

The so-called Wolverhampton style, or later bronze, which will be described in its own place, was a continuation and development from early bronze.

CHAPTER VI

DECORATION. GOLD

THE colour gold was the most important agent used to decorate papier-mâché. The colour was obtainable from many sources, and in innumerable shades and degrees from metals and alloys, it also varied widely in cost and in ease or difficulty of manipulation.

Real gold was used in two forms. Firstly as a powder, when it was strewn over a sticky surface to produce high light effects, and naturally was kept for the best and choicest work. Secondly, as gold leaf. It will be remembered that gold leaf or beaten gold has been known from time immemorial, being found among other places in the tombs of Egyptian kings.

It should be clearly kept in mind that no gold paint was used on papier-mâché. Gold leaf and metallic powder in various shades, were the forms in which gold was applied. The general principle was to lay on the leaf, cover up with a protective substance such of the leaf as was required to retain, wash off the rest, and finally dissolve off the protecting stuff, leaving the gold uncovered. This is the general principle; now for the details.

Gold leaf used by papier-mâché makers varied in price and quality. The best was pure gold,

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called "bright" gold in the trade, and always distinguishable from other qualities by its colour. This "bright" gold leaf was sold in books of 25 leaves for about 1s. 8d. a book. The process of preparing gold leaf is proverbial, as is the difficulty of handling and applying it; particular flat brushes with long fine hairs being necessary to pick up and adjust the fluttering leaves. A second quality at about one-twentieth of the cost and consisting of a low carat gold, was very extensively used.

Other qualities at about half-a-crown for a thousand leaves were not gold at all, but alloys of base metal, of which a number of shades existed. The metals were copper, brass, zinc and aluminium, and to them silver was often added.

Bright gold had a special process of its own, and could only be used on a polished surface. In this process, the surface to be covered was lightly brushed over with a solution of isinglass (a few grains in a pint of water) before the leaf was laid on. It had to set quite firmly before the next stage. The design which the gold surface was eventually to assume was now painted, drawn, sketched or outlined on the gold surface with a thick "stopping out" fluid called asphaltum, which was made by dissolving tar or pitch in pure turpentine. It had then to dry thoroughly in the open air or be passed through a stove. This painting with asphaltum was a most delicate operation, all the gold filagree and tracery that we see on the borders of trays and other articles, was painted in asphaltum on the gold leaf with a fine brush or "pencil."

When the asphaltum was set and dry, the

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uncovered gold was washed off with a mop of cotton wool or waste, leaving only the parts that were protected by the asphaltum. A further gentle mopping with wool moistened with turpentine, dissolved off the asphaltum, leaving the gold exposed in the design set out.

A word as to the brushes, which for this delicate work had to be specially made. There were only two or three makers of these for the whole industry, and they made nothing else. The brushes (called "pencils" in the shop to distinguish them from other brushes) had fine tapering points, the hairs being about an inch long and coming from the tail of a squirrel. A workman, when given a new brush, held it up to the light, spread out the hairs on the top of his thumb, and if two or three of them appeared coarser than the rest, he pulled these out before proceeding to use the brush.

The delicate hair-like gold tracery on some tea-trays looks as if nothing coarser than an etching pen could have been used to produce such fine lines; it was, however, all done in thick asphaltum on gold leaf with these pencils.

It has already been noted that no gold paint was used on papier-mâché, gold colour being always obtained from leaf gold. In early days a kind of yellow or brown coloured bronze, somewhat approximating to gold colour, was used on tea-trays and other articles. No trace of gold colour now remains on these, owing to the tarnishing of the metallic particles in the bronze.

Much play was made in gold tracing on tray

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borders, which took the form of sprays of small rose leaves, branches of Witch's broom, clusters of tendrils of vine or convolvulus and trailers of weeping willow or silver birch. All these were carried out in the way described.

The man doing them might have some patterns to help him, but he had to make up the details of the design as he went along, every detail being visualized in his mind's eye. He could not see the gold sprays, as he did them by covering up the gold, and had to wait till it was cleaned off to see the effects. This is not, however, the whole process. A piece of work of good quality might have as many as three or four shades of gold in it.

The procedure for dull or "dead" gold is different from that for bright, although the gold leaf is the same for both. For bright gold, isinglass solution is brushed over the surface on which gold leaf is to be fixed, but for dull gold, gold size is used. Gold size alone, brushed on before the leaf, would cause the colour to be dead, but it was found in practice that the workman had to add a little bronze powder or chrome yellow to colour his size, otherwise he could not distinguish the transparent fluid he was putting on. Having first marked out on the surface the spaces that were to appear dull, he covered these with size. This was allowed to dry, and then the whole was brushed over with isinglass fluid and gold leaf laid on. Asphaltum was then made to cover all parts that were to appear eventually as gold, and when this was dissolved off the dull and bright gold appeared together.

Another way of arriving at the same result was

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to cover the whole surface with gold leaf and then pick out the parts that were to appear dead with gold size and make a second application of gold leaf over all. This was a longer method, but for special reasons connected with the design had to be often adopted.

A favourite arrangement we often find on the border of a tray, was to have sprays or leaves in bright gold with here and there a folded or reversed leaf in dead gold. Such a device would require both processes being brought into play for a rose leaf, perhaps not more than half an inch long.

There were several shades of gold—besides the qualities of best and second best—that depended on the alloys used. A particularly fine pale alloy, called Warner's, was as much as two guineas an ounce, and was of course kept for specially fine pieces.

Such lengthy and complicated processes must have taken immense time and patience on the part of the "borderer," or man whose special work it was to do tray borders. Weeks were spent on one tray, and one cannot but feel grateful to the patient workman, who laboured so long over one tray, in which we can find no blemish or sign of weariness or lack of interest. The man would not be considered an artist, but merely a skilled workman, of which as many degrees of quality must have existed as among artists.

It may often happen in reference to a pictorial or flower painted tray, that one is more attracted by the delicate gold work of the border, than by the principal design in the centre.

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Two examples of border are seen in two trays with quite plain centres. It would be difficult to find neater or better work of its kind.

They are in different styles. The one tray (Plate 6) is finished in a body colour of imperial purple; the tracery, all in bright gold, is extremely fine and delicate and in unusual quantity. The other tray (Plate 7) is the usual black colour, and the tracery on it not so fine, but the small leaves of which the border is mostly composed, are drawn in minutest detail, and two or three different shades of gold are brought in. With these fine specimens before us, one is apt to favour the view, that the craft exhibited in papier-mâché ornament, was of better quality than the art displayed in painting it. In some cases the craftsman was superior to the artist, but not always.

These trays show great refinement, and the centres of them being left plain, points to the fact that the designers considered the elaborate work on the borders, a sufficient decoration.

Flower painting has not yet been touched upon; but an incident occurs to one in this connection that may not be out of place. Flower painting when the work of a real artist, is on a higher plane than the borderer's art, but unless the artist is a real one the border may be more attractive than the centre. The borderer required time and infinite patience for his best work.

Now let us see what an artist did. Walton and Co., of Wolverhampton, were preparing a table for the London Exhibition of 1851. It was an unusually large one, and took much longer in the mechanical making than was anticipated, so much so that when

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the borderer had taken a long time in working out an exquisite gold margin, the head of the firm had doubts as to whether it could be got ready in time. The master sent for his principal painter, Haselar—of whom we shall have much to say later—and asked him how long he would take to paint a bunch of roses on the centre. "A day—or two hours if necessary," was the confident reply.

It was all done in one day, the device being a large bunch of roses, across which from side to side of the table, was a single stalk of canary creeper that appeared to be laid over the roses. It was a beautiful piece of work, and much admired. The deliberate craftsmanship of the borderer, though the best of its kind, cannot from any point of view be compared with Haselar's rapid touch.

Another and very important use of gold was to produce sunlight effect by gold-coloured bronze (*gold-coloured* bronze was quite a different thing from gold bronze, which might be any colour bronzed with gold). This was done by dusting metallic particles or sized surfaces, the brightest metal being required for the highest lights. These effects are dealt with in the chapter on bronze pictures and again in connection with later bronze or Wolverhampton atmospheres.

Exotic birds were much favoured by some decorators, and we often find gold or silver leaf, or foil, under the paint, to give an extra brilliancy to a flower or to the plumage of a bird or butterfly. the paint being more or less transparent. A tray (Plate 8, Fig. 2) shows this effect.

Foil was also inserted behind gems or glass

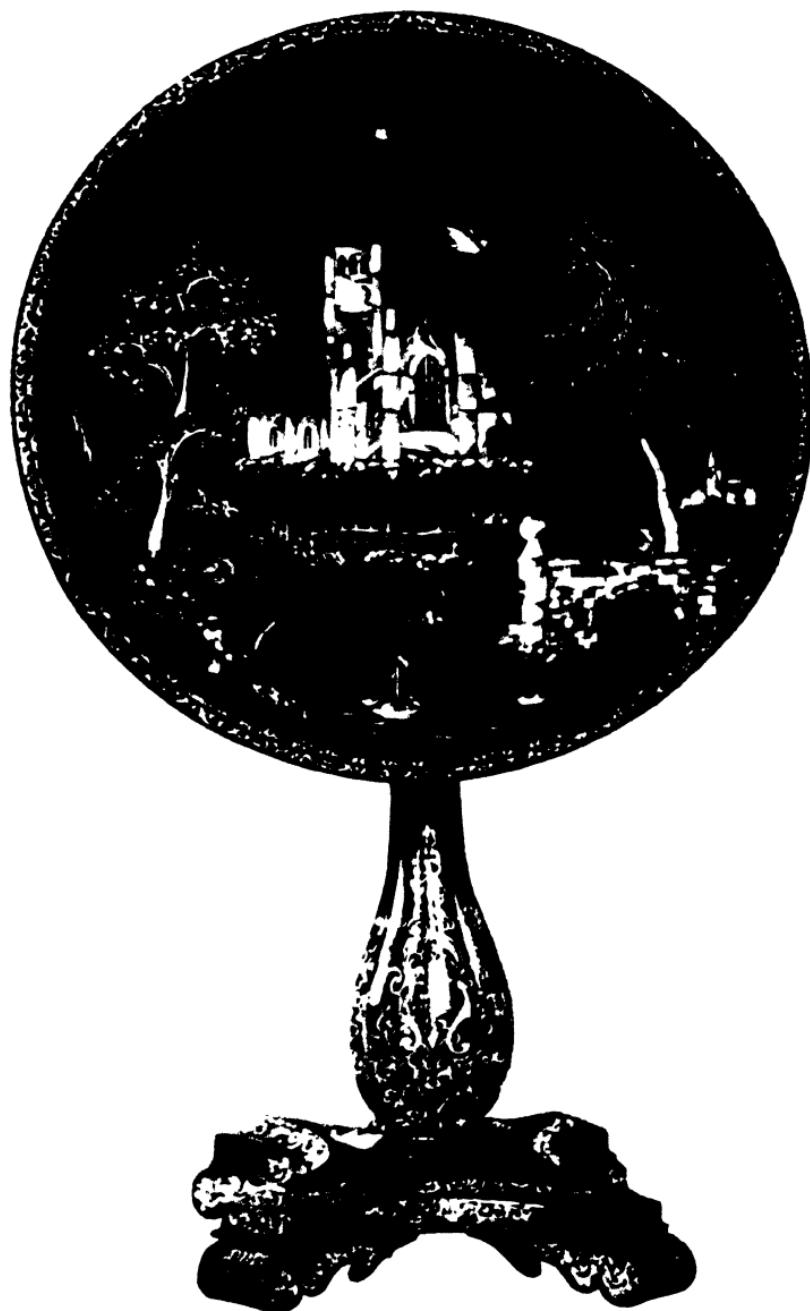
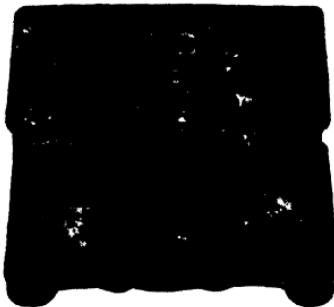


Table. — Melrose Abbey. — (page 49.)

PLATE XIII.



1. Work Case, *Jennens & Bettridge*. (page 51.) 2. Tea Caddy. (page 5
3. Ink Stand, Early Pearl Work. *Jennens & Bettridge*. 4. Hand Screen
Oriental style. (page 70.) 5. Stationery Case. (page 64.) 6. Blott
"Cavans Well," *Fotherope & Shenton*. 7. Blotter, Natural Flowers and Ge
Ornament

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jewels in so-called gem inlay. Sometimes the holes made as if for jewels, contained only silver or gold foil, as in the doorplate (Plate 9, Fig. 5). In both cases a plate of glass was fixed over the ornament.

Mechanical gold was mentioned among inventions. It was not gold but some special mixture of metals that gave it some novelty of colour or other property.

Difficulty was experienced at one time in getting in fine powder, some of the shades of gold required for particular ornament, and it was necessary to crush up leaves of metal to get the dust. This wasteful procedure was relieved when Bessemer, (later of steel fame) found means of grinding up the metals involved.

Aluminium may be mentioned here, although it gave silver and not gold colour. It was used, but in very small quantity, before 1864, when some change in preparation made it much less costly. A moonlight effect, or a silver-lining to clouds, was got by powdering with aluminium, a gold-sized surface in association with other metallic powders. Another effect got from aluminium was a silver bronze for flowers and leaves. It was not quite natural, but very pretty. The tea-tray with cyclamen (Plate 10) was by Philip McCallum, when painting for Jennens and Bettridge, shows the effect of a silvery bronze. The silver bronze on this tray was probably done with silver or silver and lead. Aluminium came in long after this tray was made.

The leaf method of using gold was a wasteful one, more of the metal being wiped off than remained on the surface. With the cheaper artificial leaves

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this was not of importance, but in order to recover as far as possible unused gold, all swabs of cotton waste that had been mopped on the gold surfaces, were thrown into a particular vessel in the workshop. At regular intervals these were collected from the shops by men in the gold metal trade. The gold was extracted by burning, and a return of as much as six or seven pounds, would often be made to a shop for a year's collection.

CHAPTER VII

DECORATION. PEARL

PEARL shell application to papier-mâché was not a new invention when Jennens and Bettridge obtained a patent for it in 1825, for in the year 1778 Clay had brought it into a patent for ornamenting paper ware.

It may be there was novelty in the way of applying the shell. Jennens's method consisted in attaching it with cement or varnish to a polished surface. The technique of pearl cutting and preparation has already been dealt with; it remains only to consider how it was used.

A few fancy articles of house furniture, such as toilet glasses, brushes, and workboxes and accessories, had previously been inlaid with pearl, which was very generally used in buttons, stick handles, counters, etc., but with no other material has it been so popularly associated as with papier-mâché. The pretty contrast with shining black, could not fail to strike those on the lookout for effective decoration, at a time when the material was becoming so popular in the hands of Jennens and Bettridge. Pearl retained its popularity for years—for so long as the makers used it with taste and discrimination. Having found a satisfactory ornament which took well, and was not too costly, some fell into the error of

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overlavishness in using it, and seemed to regard quantity as more important than quality. Inferior and bad pearl ornament is about as ugly as any abused decoration can be, and the deterioration in quality of work and subsequent extinction of the industry, was no doubt partly attributable to the abuse of pearl. This kind of ornament was not taken up by the Wolverhampton makers until 1852 or 1853, which was of course long after it was in common use in the Birmingham shops.

Pearl came in in 1825, and between this date and 1850 most of the best pearl work was done. After 1850 the taste in pearl, as in other ornament, became too florid. Some few shops, however, among the many making papier-mâché after this date, confined themselves to tasteful and artistic work, examples of which we prize as specimens of later work.

The earlier ways of manipulating pearl were extremely difficult and tedious, and careful work, such as we come across on various tables, chairs, desks, and tea-trays of those days, must have demanded infinite painstaking effort to produce them.

Occasionally one meets with very crude nubbly masses of pearl in tables and trays, and are apt to attribute them to early experimental days. This is probably a mistake; the earliest were better than the latest pieces. Pearl was not adopted in many shops in early days, and these inferior instances, are more likely to be the result of cheap, hastily done work of late date. The pearl plates forming temple roofs in the chair backs (Plate 11)—the work of Alsager

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—are typical of the earlier work. The laminæ are not very thin, and the plain uncoloured surfaces not so iridescent as is often the case; probably a dull kind of shell was used on them.

Generally, pearl when in large plates, was overlaid with transparent paint, which lightened it up, but in this particular style of decoration it was often left uncoloured.

A characteristic denoting high class work, is when large blocks are placed side by side, and the arrangement of the grain, or “way” of the pearl, such, that adjacent pieces reflect the same colour. We find, for example, when looking at the corner of a church tower, the grain is so set that on one side we have a pink reflection, while the other side of the tower shows green. As we move to another point of view the colours may be reversed.

A good deal of experience as well as skill was required to get this result, which distinguishes the best work. It is perhaps the most beautiful of all effects derived from pearl, and was only attained in a comparatively small number of pieces manufactured, and by few men. An example is found in a round table (Plate 12) on which Melrose Abbey is portrayed in pearl, the only other ornament being gold.

The view is taken so that one end and one side are seen divided by an angle or corner. The end, being in fuller face, has the grain of the pearl nearly horizontal, while that of the receding side slopes away. The tower of the Abbey further away from the spectator and in the middle of the building, is also nearly in full face and the grain horizontal.

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In the foreground is a broken causeway, of which the wall is built of small blocks of stone separated by plaster, as they would be in a stone wall; here the shell pieces representing stones, are set haphazard and each reflects its own colour.

A few narrow lines of pearl and gold indicate in perspective the surface of the water from the foreground to the middle distance.

In the foreground is the causeway and bridge terminating in a solid pillar surmounted by a globe, all in pearl. A boat with sails, also in the foreground, is by no means realistic, but, like the birds flying overhead, is very pretty.

Two trees, one on each side, framing the ruin, bear witness to the infinite time and patience taken over detail. One tree, a fir, has the branches, twigs and even fir needles worked out in atoms of pearl and gold. The leaves on the other tree are little ovals of pearl encircled in gold, and a weeping willow in the immediate foreground has sprays of pearl as fine as hairs, drooping over the water.

There is no maker's name on the table, which probably dates about 1840, and has been carefully looked after. An ornament like this is unsuitable for a table; it cannot be seen to advantage when flat, and one would hesitate to put anything on it. It has probably spent its years, as it now spends its days—standing, turned up, in a corner.

For support, the table has a bulbous pedestal of papier-mâché, ending in a cross-piece with four small feet; this is by no means the most secure of supports, but fortunately it has escaped injury. The

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flat top is very solid and heavy, and a fall would probably damage it irreparably. How a hollow pedestal is made out of sheets of paper will be explained later.

Few papier-mâché tables, except the light four-sided ones, survive to a good age without damage. The pedestal of a round table is always a source of danger and weakness, and once broken cannot be adequately repaired. Nothing in furniture is more depressing than a ricketty papier-mâché table with ornament poor in taste and in bad condition. The sight thereof is apt to set one against the whole material, and it is not to be wondered at that such things are often given away by dealers, at a quarter of what they cost to make.

These chairs and tables are instances of pearl ornament used in two very different ways, viz., in large plates for buildings and walls; and secondly in small pieces representing leaves of trees viewed from some distance.

The next example shows another quite different style of pearl ornament. In the work-case (Plate 13, Fig. 1) it is intended to represent flowers. There is nothing realistic about the flowers, in some of which leaves and petals appear as plain ovals of pearl set in a gold circle. In others the whole flower is on a single piece of shell, brushed over with one colour, the petals and stamens being pencilled out in gold. The pearl is much thinned down for these flowers, and the rather jagged edges, show it to be cut out and not dissolved out with acid. The thinner the flake, the more difficult it was to get a regular edge, when this was cut out with a tool. If

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the piece were thick enough to be filed, like those pieces in the chair backs, its edges were neater.

The gold line so often seen closely following the outline of the pearl, is often an indication that though the maker had done his best to make clean-cut edges, he was aware that the edges required a little covering up to conceal roughness.

Flowers in pearl are not very successful; much ingenuity was brought to bear and much time and toil, but the effect is generally somewhat laboured and unnatural.

The work-case is an example of pearl flower ornament. It is a very fragile little article by Jennens and Bettridge, and has been so carefully kept in the writer's family for eighty or ninety years, as to have escaped without a visible scratch.

On the front and back are vases of flowers in pearl, plain in outline, and thinly covered with transparent paint in purple and green. Single flowers, disproportionately large, and coloured in the same way, and with a few details of stamens, etc., in gold, surround the vase. Some of the leaves, also in pearl, are set in small ovals of gold, with ribs and veins lightly painted in green.

Neat and dainty as the article is, the result hardly repays the amount of detail work put into it. Perhaps if we had not seen natural flower painting, which came to decorate papier-mâché later, we should appreciate these pearl flowers more than we do. The careful, painstaking work disarms criticism; otherwise we might call them laboured and artificial.

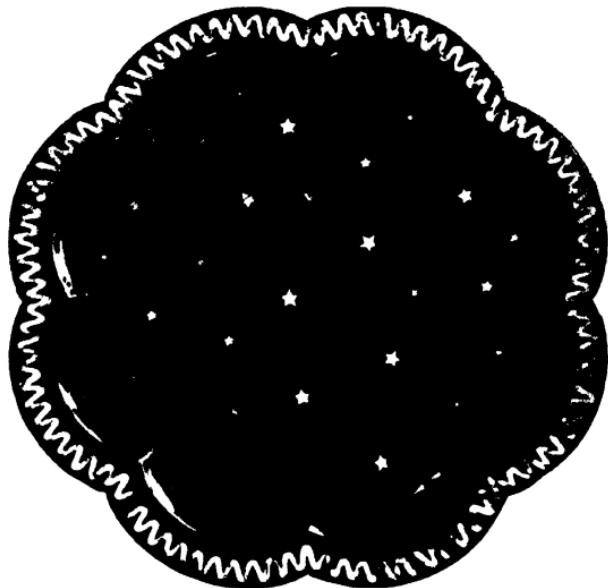
Pearl was very satisfactory when introduced in

PLATE XIV.

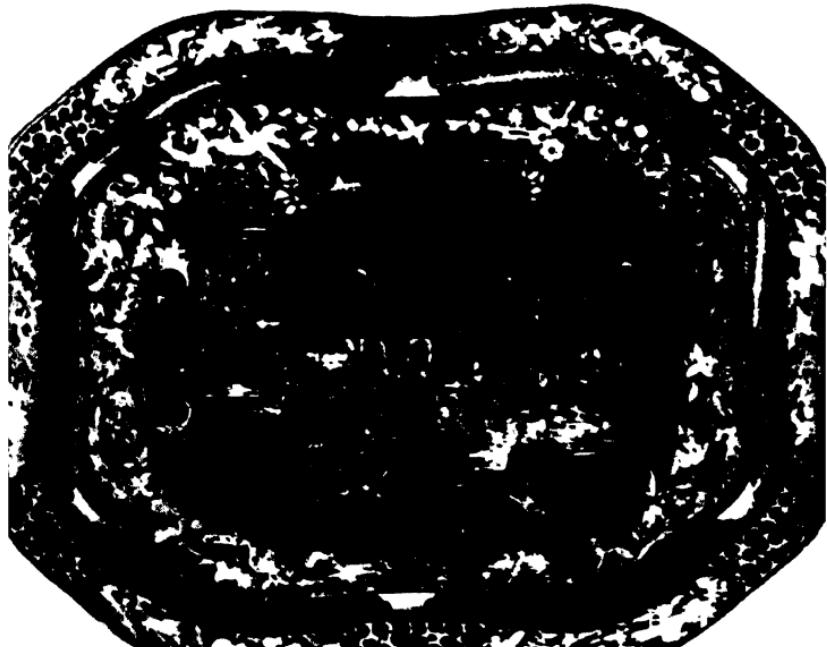


1. Knee-hole Table. Age 50. 2. Box-table. Teak and Mahogany. (page 55.)

PLATE XV.



Tea Tray. — Pearl ribbed design. — (page 63.)





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large flakes of plain shape, and especially when set as in the Melrose Abbey table. A series of castles, cathedrals, and "stately homes," was done in this way, and good pictures are occasionally met with in pearl. It is probable that the idea, and perhaps the pictures, were widely copied, for much inferior work in this style exists.

At the time of the next example, a tea-caddy (Plate 13, Fig. 2) by Alsager and Neville, some advance had been made in both technical and ornamental directions. The general style is similar to the work-case; the pearl is rather bolder, and a vase of flowers on the top is more ornate in outline. A garland of grapes and vine leaves is an advance, and the detail very fine in places.

The jar or vase of flowers—sometimes a bowl or basket—is a design one very often comes across in pearl ornament, the size of the vase corresponding roughly to the size of the surface to be decorated. It was abandoned as a regular design about the mid-century in favour of various other devices; but at a later date, in the attempt to return to old patterns, it was again used.

The front of the caddy, sinuous in outline with vertical pillars, is overhung by the top, and the bevelled rim at the bottom projects similarly. It stands on four small feet. The processes in making such an article out of sheets of paper, will be considered when dealing with the manufacturing side in Jennens and Bettridge's workshops.

Another variety of pearl work is shown in the inkstand (Plate 14, Fig. 2), in which pearl is introduced in large flakes to represent leaves, and

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not flowers. The edges of these leaves are fretted and notched like oak-leaves, and are well and clearly cut. Smaller circles of pearl, also perfectly cut, may be intended for berries or fruit of some kind. The remainder of the decoration consists of oak-leaves, painted mostly in mauve and outlined in gold. There is no difficulty about placing this interesting piece of work. The general quality of body and ornament point to it as of early, rather than late, manufacture; though the pearl in large clean-cut pieces, is evidence of not *very* early make. The uniformity of the colour painting of the leaves, suggests Jennens and Bettridge, while the choice of colours, viz., mauve and pearl, show that it is intended as "ceremonial ware," fashionable after the death of the Prince Consort.

These examples, the chairs, table, work-case, tea-caddy and inkstand, summarise to a great extent, the processes that had been gradually evolved up to about 1850—more painstaking work was never done.

It is worth while going in detail over the processes involved in making the work-case. We will assume that the plain body has been made from a few layers of paper (it is very thin, not more than an eighth of an inch thick), and has been thoroughly smoothed and received its black coat and one of varnish. After the smoothing and varnishing processes were complete, the next step was the application of the pearl. A sketch or scheme was made, and pearl flakes of the size and shapes required, chosen from boxes or drawers in which pearl laminæ of all sizes and shapes, were kept.

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The transparent varnish used on the black coat was also the adhesive agent, and after the pieces were laid on in their proper places according to the scheme and allowed to dry, a great deal of rubbing, alternating with coats of varnish, was required to bring all to a level, and provide a surface so perfect, that when varnished over, no irregularity could be felt with the finger. A good deal of this part of the process was done by girls, using chamois leather.

Gold leaf was the next application, and here a different procedure was necessary according as the gold was to be bright or dead in appearance. As already explained, the leaf was the same in both cases, and it was the kind of adhesive agent used, that decided the tint the gold would ultimately assume. In many designs both bright and dead gold took part.

This process it was that called for the highest skill on the workman's part, for all gold ornament, from the broad hard lines of a geometrical design with circles, ovals, arabesques, etc., to the flowers, leaves, twigs and fine tendrils, had to be painted in asphaltum on the gold leaf exactly as they were to appear in gold, when the design was finished.

It has been remarked that no such thing as gold paint was used and no stencil or mechanical pattern; all the thick and thin lines, circles and twigs were done by the skilful hand of the workman. This was the process for all gold work on papier-mâché, and when one looks at the fine and excellent painting on all manner of objects, one cannot help being struck by the skill and craft brought to bear, by men, who

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had had no training in painting, except what they picked up by watching others in the workshop.

The colour painting of the flowers on the work-case amounts to very little, it is mostly a brush over with transparent paint, with little or no attempt at shading, relying on the lustre of the pearl and the black surface, for its effect. This however is not quite all the process, for if stamens and other small details are to appear on the coloured flower in gold, isinglass solution and gold leaf will have to be again applied and these fine details painted in asphaltum by the same process as before.

The little work-case has many separate designs on its lid, front, back and sides and each group of flowers had to be done separately and with the same elaborate processes.

The date of the work-case is between 1830 and 1840 and it is marked "Jennens and Bettridge." When we consider the time occupied in preparing the pearl in addition to the processes described here, we realize that even small articles could only be turned out at a comparatively high cost—what they would cost to-day is bewildering to consider. It must have been with some relief the makers turned to flower painting as a decoration, when it came into vogue, for it involved much less time and the cost could be precisely calculated.

The knee-hole table (Plate 14, Fig. 1) is in very similar style to the work-case and caddy, but is smoother and even more finished. The body is of wood and very well joineder, the drawers especi-

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ally fitting most accurately. The table has been well cared for and is in perfect condition.

Men decorating this table had a decided advantage over those who made the work-case and caddy, for their work was all done on flat panels lying on the bench, several of which might be worked at simultaneously. The panels were afterwards inserted into the wood surfaces, and so well has this been done that it requires a careful examination to detect them. The panels are oval, and are let into the flat top, the sides, and fronts of drawers, with a small inset into the knee of each bent table-leg.

The table is about the same date as the caddy, and later than the work-case. It is more elaborately decorated, and the general finish excellent.

One feature calls for attention. We noticed in the work-case evidence of the difficulty the makers had in cutting out pieces of pearl accurately, and without leaving the edges too ragged. The edges were encircled by bands of gold leaf to hide any raggedness, showing that these irregularities were recognised but could not be helped, and were not the result of carelessness.

In the tea-caddy there was less irregularity of edge and the outlines more accurate. Less simple forms had been chosen, and it appeared as if some of the difficulties had been overcome.

In the knee-hole table a further advance had been made, for the decoration in the same style is smoother, more regular, and perfectly finished. It is possible the workmen may have been more expert, but a more probable reason is that their methods were improved.

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Among the pieces of pearl in the table are some patterns that recur over and over again, all exactly alike, one of them being a complicated gridiron kind of shape. This recurrence of pattern gives the clue to the improvement in the character of the work. The workmen, instead of having to cut out shell shapes with scissors or knife after they had been rubbed very thin, had a better method of shaping them to the exact pattern. It may have been done with a shaped press tool, or the acid method may have been adopted. For the latter a piece of shell of sufficient size was taken, and the exact pattern of the piece required was painted on the surface with a waxy, acid-resisting solution. Strong acid was then brushed over it and the unprotected portion of shell eaten away.

Although this method had some advantages over the cutting methods and was freely used, the majority of pearl was still cut out with scissors or the press tool. The pearl plates from which pieces were to be dissolved out, did not require to be so excessively thinned down as when they were to be cut out. There would thus be a saving of time and trouble, and there would be less breakage. The edges being clean, it was not thought necessary to encircle them with gold lines.

The scrap or pearl pieces of nondescript shapes, left after the designed pieces had dropped out of the flake, were used up in various ways. We come across them worked into borders and edges of trays and other articles, and there were other ingenious uses found for them.

It happens sometimes that we find these scraps

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used for flowers or parts of flowers, and as they had not been designed for this purpose, they do not exactly fit. To hide these inaccuracies we find them surrounded by a gold band—according to the old method. It is a point to be remembered that ill-fitting pieces of pearl, surrounded by a band of gold leaf, does not necessarily mean that the article was made before the improved method of separating shell took place; it may mean that the workmen were using up scrap.

The London Exhibition of 1851 had a baleful influence on papier-mâché, from the effects of which it never recovered.

The industry was, after all, an artificial one, based on an artificial product, useful only in supplying a suitable medium for a particular kind of decoration, and when this decoration for some reason failed to attract, the *raison d'être* of papier-mâché was gone.

By bringing so many people, native and foreign, together, the Exhibition had a remarkably stimulating effect on trade, and financial prosperity for many years was the result.

Thirty years before, at the time of the "Britannia" panel (Plate 5) people were still thinking of Trafalgar and Waterloo in a self-laudatory sort of way, and of what a satisfactory state of things had been brought about by force of arms.

In 1851 a different spirit prevailed. The lean years which lasted well into the 'forties had given way to a time of prosperity, and now instead of any aggressive attitude, the popular one was that of

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inviting all nations to come and see what the blessings of peace had done, and how we were prospering under them.

It may have occurred to a few that this new attitude was not more likely to endear us to our neighbours than our former victorious airs, but we were not self-conscious about consistency, and shouted in favour of Peace and invited everyone to keep it and ensue it.

To make the Great Exhibition a success, influence was brought to bear on producers and manufacturers, to exert themselves to the utmost to provide something special—something out of the common. This effort, harmless and stimulating as it may have been to some trades, was just about fatal to papier-mâché !

A number of workshops, with Jennens and Bettridge at their head, had so perfected their methods with their designers and trained men that they had reached a high standard, and were turning out articles good enough to be shown at any exhibition.

The glamour of trying to make something to astonish the world, seems to have turned the heads of the master japanners. With an eye to effect, grotesque and extravagant forms took the place of simple and graceful ones, and ornament was piled on so abundantly as to extinguish completely the beautiful black lustrous body, that made such an excellent background for modest decoration.

Illustrated catalogues make this clear. The articles themselves, as far as one can judge by

PLATE XVI.

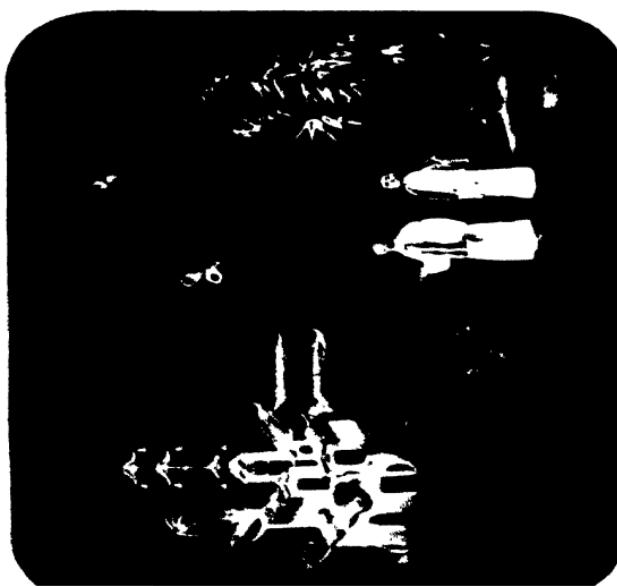


1. Verbenas. *Breakspeare*. (page 88.) 2. Blotter. *Jennens & Bettridge*. (page 101.)
3. Blotter. *Breakspeare*. (page 88.) 4. Tray. *Breakspeare*. (page 88.)
5. Stationery Case, neat Mosaic style. (page 63.) * 6. Stationery Case, blend

PLATE XVII.



Part of a small brachiopod shell, showing the dorsal side.



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pictures, were perfectly made and finished, but often in the worst possible taste.

Another instance of ambition to produce something astonishing, is brought to mind in this connection. The Coalport China factories had reached a pretty standard in flower painting and modelling in porcelain. Shown at the Exhibition was a monstrous and preposterous bunch of flowers and vase combined, all made in porcelain and technically a masterpiece, but devoid of all beauty by the overwhelming mass of ornament

The artists and workmen in papier-mâché and china, had they been left to themselves, would have shown their best work, and this would have been good enough for anything. The desire to effect something startling was fatal.

Following the Exhibition, the rivalry to eclipse one another and the unnatural twist given to decoration, led to fresh competition in quantity of ornament; and when we consider the many steps and tedious processes involved in making the better class of goods, it is clear that if the cost was not to soar to impossible heights, cheaper methods would have to be found.

Financial crises in the trade were only to be expected, and in the next few years things reached a bad pass. The popular taste had been stimulated to unhealthy appetite by the profusion of decoration on the goods offered for sale, and at the same time shops were finding it difficult, to turn out at a reasonable figure, the elaborate ornamentation they had been fostering. The trade had got into a false posi-

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tion; it could not go on, and something had to be done.

Different firms had their own ways of trying to overcome the difficulty. The inevitable tendency, however, was to lower the price of individual articles by turning out a larger quantity at a cheaper cost, but of inferior quality. To keep pace with the demand for excessive ornament that the public had been led to expect, all sorts of substitution for the expensive craftsmanship that had existed before, were brought in, and it is not surprising that the popular taste sickened on the gross diet.

J. Alsager and G. Neville had left Jennens and Bettridge to work for themselves in 1846. Haselar also had left them to go to Walton's at Wolverhampton. In 1864, or a year later, Jennens and Bettridge—who we believe did not seek to economize by unworthy methods—came to a standstill, and after trying to carry on for two or three years John Bettridge, who had gone into partnership with a man named Swan, made over the business to McCallum and Hodson.

James McCallum had been trained with Jennens and Bettridge, and (Edward) Hodson was a business man with outside experience. They made a success of it, and ultimately became the last survivors of the industry. Credit is due to this firm for a determined effort to straighten out the difficulties the industry had got into, by a return to earlier styles of ornament, facilitated by up-to-date methods. The attempt, however, had only temporary success.

A style of pearl work inaugurated by McCallum and Hodson fits naturally into this period. It differs

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from the last three examples shown, not so much in reducing the quantity of pearl used, as in the extreme neatness and symmetry of the ornament (Plate 16, Fig. 5). This was characteristic of the designs that included Oriental, formal and informal flower painting and bronze. The design of the flower vase or basket of flowers in pearl, came into the picture again, the difference being in the smoothness and neatness with which it was carried out. The difference as it appeared to be, was similar to that one sees between hand- and machine-made objects. A chair of this period (Plate 1, Frontispiece), either by McCallum and Hodson or Alsager and Neville, shows painted flowers in combination with pearl ornament. The frame of the chair is wood and strongly designed for use; only the cut-out panel back is in papier-mâché.

Following the outline of the panel is a narrow line of pearl about a quarter of an inch wide, with scroll ends, and every piece perfectly fitting and symmetrical. Similar lines in pearl enclose spaces for flowers with key pattern in places.

The flowers are brightly and realistically painted; mixed with them are pearl flowers which show by their absolute neatness the perfect control the workers now had over this material. The pearl pieces fit like mosaics; in fact, the name "mosaic" would be a suitable one for this style, which has a character of its own. A tea-tray (Plate 15, Fig. 1) marked with a crown and underneath it "Jennens and Bettridge, makers to the Queen," is in a style unlike anything we have dealt with before, and

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might quite accurately be regarded as anticipating McCallum and Hodson's "mosaic."

The pearl riband round the edge, which is the only decoration except the little scattered pearl stars, might suggest a copy of the riband pattern on some of Chippendale's work; on the other hand it may be simply an idea that sprang up in the brains of Jennens and Bettridge. The design is simple and effective and beautifully carried out as regards workmanship, and seems to confirm the statement that Jennens and Bettridge were trying in their later days to return to simpler ornament.

Another example of McCallum and Hodson's work, is a shaped stationary case (Plate 13, Fig. 5). It reproduces the basket of flowers and brings in some descendant of the remote "willow pattern," in which graceful palms take the place of the old formal trees. The general "prettiness" of the box is typical.

It is vain to speculate on the course of events if the unfortunate degeneration of the twenty years following 1850 had not occurred. Possibly papier-mâché would still be a living industry. At it is, a little good work was done by two or three firms up to the end of the century, but always with the knowledge that they could not compete with the cheap florid goods pressed for sale.

Except for flower painting—which did not come under the same competitive influences—very little of the output of the last forty years of the industry is worth keeping, and we must be content to cherish and admire those masterpieces of craft that still survive from the first half of the nineteenth century.

PLATE XVIII.



Tea Tray. Chinese Scenes. (page 72.)

PLATE XIX



CHAPTER VIII

DECORATION. GEM-INLAY

THE patent of 1847 taken out by T. H. Jennens and recorded among the other patents, gives particulars as to how the patentee—for inlaying purposes—used glass, gems, jewels, “real and fictitious” pearls, glass cut or “quicked” or otherwise, paste, enamel, wax, ivory, tortoiseshell, shell and other beads and glass beads called pearl beads. It is certain that not much advantage was taken of this patent, and that little so-called gem-inlay was actually done. It may have been found to be too expensive in time and material, or it may not have hit the popular taste, or it may only have appealed to a small portion of the public. It is very scarce now; one who had spent a long life in the trade remarked that he had not seen a piece for sixty years.

The method of doing this inlay is described in the patent. It is enough to recall here that the gems were stuck into holes in a decorated panel and overlaid with a sheet of glass. Jennens and Bettridge are the only firm known to have worked in this style.

A blotter (Plate 9, Fig. 3) is a typical example of Jennens’s work, and fortunately is well preserved. The gems are not real ones; they represent

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diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds and topazes. They are beautifully faceted like jewels, each in a setting of gold leaf. The oval panel containing them is encircled by a garland of oak leaves in gold, and the mount is a deep velvety blue technically called "Victorian blue." The space between the garland and stones is filled in with a special white paint, called "Kremlin white." It came from Russia in small one or two pound packets, and was extremely hard to break up. This, coupled with the fact that it was costly, led to its use being restricted to comparatively few articles, and these only of the very best.

This kind of work is not suitable for a blotter; it is heavy, and any accident breaking the glass would entirely dislocate the stones and ruin it.

Another example (Plate 9, Fig. 5) of gem-inlay is a door finger-plate by Charles Midgley, working at the time for Alsager and Neville. It is an imitation, of imitation gem-inlay. The holes cut out in the panel are filled with metal foil—gold and silver—instead of gems or glass. Both specimens are covered with rather heavy glass sheets, and it may well be that the scarcity of examples, is largely accounted for by the frequent occurrence of breakage, of which there must have been great risk.

Considering the artificiality of the whole ornament—of which nothing is what it purports to be except the plate of glass—the result is surprisingly good, largely due, as in so many cases, to the excellent quality of the gold work.

CHAPTER IX

DECORATION. ORIENTAL STYLE

THE name of Joseph Booth will always be associated with oriental design on papier-mâché. He it was who introduced the style and gave it a character of his own. No man or artist among the many who worked in decorating papier-mâché, was so distinctly identified with a style.

A tea tray of Japannese lacquer (Plate 15, Fig. 2) specially interests us in this connection.

It is of oval shape very like the "Gothic," and is rather lighter in weight than papier-mâché trays of the same size, but as regards appearance it is hardly to be distinguished from them; the back however, on which the lac has been less thickly applied, shows the grain of wood through the black, and at the edges white wood can be seen in places.

This tray may be recognised as the type or pattern Clay was seeking to reproduce, when he composed the first papier-mâché. He had good reason to be satisfied with his experiment, for the glossy black surface afforded by lac or lacquer on a wood body and hardened in the sun, is so closely imitated by a paper body covered with tar varnish, that the two surfaces are practically indistinguishable.

The decoration on this lacquer tray of oriental

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figures, temples, trees, etc., in lines of bright gold with no conspicuous masses, but all in a quiet, restrained well executed ornament, is clearly what Booth had before him. Booth also had the more formal willow pattern, and the styles of decoration we come across from Booth onwards, are mixtures of these types embellished by the individual tastes of different workmen.

Joseph Booth came to Jennens and Bettridge in 1821, and remained with them till 1835.

It is rather extraordinary that in the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, when ornamentation in British industries was largely affected by eastern influence, papier-mâché—a material specially made to overcome the technical difficulties japanners had in imitating lacquer—did not develop an oriental feeling till 50 years after Clay's invention.

Having found a substitute with a surface and constitution not unlike lacquer, the natural course for the japanners would seem to have been to impose lacquer designs on it, but for some reason it was left to Booth, many years after, to produce a pronounced style. When the influence did arrive, it was unmistakable. Booth's designs were uncompromising "Willow pattern," formal and conventional to a degree.

Tea-trays and panels—the latter often in the form of pole-screen tops—are the principal objects bearing Booth's oriental designs, and these are not often found in very good condition.

As long ago as 1866, W. C. Aitken, writing of

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papier-mâché among Birmingham industries, tells us that works by Booth were then rare. That was sixty years ago,—sixty years during which papier-mâché has been neglected and out of favour,—so we can safely conclude these works are seldom seen to-day.

Booth's style in his early days was founded on willow-pattern, to which he closely adhered. It was not exactly pretty, but had individuality and attraction. It was widely copied and imitated, perhaps more so than any other style; but from the outset copyists toned down the formalism. There was probably no shop of importance engaged in decorating japan and papier-mâché ware, that did not copy Booth's Chinese patterns with variations of their own.

A pair of screen-tops (Plate 17) are after the style of Booth, one feature of which was his impasto or gesso relief. The method of doing this (also taken from the East) was simple enough, and most of the imitators of his style copied this also.

A paste mostly of whitening and gold-size was moulded to the outline of a mound, building, human figure or whatever Booth wished to appear in relief. It was then stove-dried and appropriately painted. In some places he allowed the whitening to show through the outer coat, to give a high light effect.

Like other Western imitators of Chinese patterns, Booth gave the human features a Western cast. The conventionality of his early work was less marked in his later, as already said, and from the first his copyists toned it down. The

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familiar details of Willow-pattern, gave way in favour of designs where more temples, pagodas, and towers were introduced with large slabs of pearl, suitably shaped, for triangular roofs or flat walls. The formal trees, some fruit-bearing and others weeping, were made the vehicles of pearl ornament and gold tracery.

In some of his pictures, Booth used bronze gold. This, being brass or other base metal, has tarnished with time, and no gold colour remains. On other articles he used leaf gold, and these remain perfectly bright.

A pair of hand-screens (Plate 13, Fig. 4, and Plate 4, Fig. 3) are interesting rather than beautiful in demonstrating a stage in the advance from Booth's formality. The usual figures, temple, bridge and flowering tree are all there in realistic fashion. On the reverse are flowers and a butterfly, rather formally painted but not strikingly so. Impasto relief appears on both sides. The date of these screens can be guessed at with tolerable precision. It happens to be known that, in the 'fifties, coloured plates from which these flowers were taken, were kept in a drawer in a certain workshop. Realistic flower painting was then in full swing, and workmen were discouraged from studying these plates, lest their styles should be spoilt, the plates being considered out-of-date.

The texture of the body of the hand-screens is very good, the paint is thick and the varnish treacley; the surface of the flowers is rather coarse and rough. These screens may be regarded as a link between Booth and the flower painters.

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Working at a japanner's bench at the Old Hall, Wolverhampton, was another Booth, Edwin by name. It is probable he was a brother of Joseph, though confirmation is lacking. Edwin Booth's particular bent was delicate gold work in the Indian style, for which he had quite a reputation. His fellow workmen found him somewhat overbearing in character, but not otherwise remarkable, and there was nothing about him to foreshadow his famous career as a tragic actor.

Another notoriety attended the family, for it was his son, Wilkes Booth, who assassinated President Lincoln.

In tracing the lives and careers of men working in the japanning shops—whether as masters or men—the tendency for sons and nephews to follow fathers and uncles in the same occupation cannot fail to be noticed. When a man was established, whether as owner, foreman, or workman, he seldom left the trade, and generally brought up his sons in it. It was probably a feature common to many workshops besides japanners' in those days.

Chinese designs copied by many artists striving for novelty and effect, became less and less formal and more ornamental. The grotesque and naïve appealed to some, whilst the sparkle of iridescent pearl and paint attracted others, and many blends of the two types gave scope for plenty of originality. Productions in this character and more or less beautiful, occupied the stage until flower painting came in as a powerful rival.

One of a pair of chairs (Plate 11, Fig. 1) date

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from some time between the two pairs of screens, and show the style as carried out about 1840. Jennens and Bettridge were probably the makers, and Alsager the designer. The human figures, bridges and pearl parapets, are graceful variants of Willow-pattern. The Oriental buildings with roofs of single pearl slabs and gilded towers, no thicker than pillars, clustering round the main buildings, all suggest John Alsager as the designer.

Palm trees with alternate fronds of pearl and gold as shown here, were a favourite device with different artists, while the weeping trees with fine gold sprays and pearly fruit, are a considerable departure from Joseph Booth's severity.

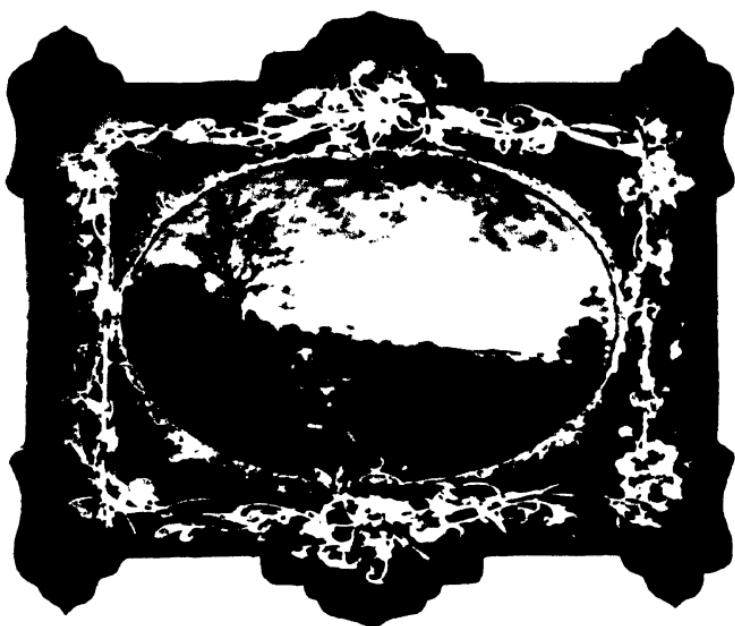
Another example of Alsager's work, a card tray (Plate 8, Fig 4) was done while he was still apprentice at Jennens and Bettridge's.

Other examples of Alsager's work are seen in Plate 8, Figs. 5 and 4, Plate 9, Figs. 1 and 2, Plate 28, Fig. 1.

An example of Chinese influence may be usefully brought in here, although it is of considerably later date. (Plate 18) Several styles are touched upon in twelve or thirteen little scenes arranged over the bottom and sides of the tea-tray. In the left-hand top corner is the unmistakable Willow-pattern bridge and figures, though quite unlike the conventional type. There may be a story connecting these scenes; otherwise they might be described as "glimpses of Chinese life at Wembley."

The middle and largest picture is of two Eastern people with European faces, dressed in embroidered

PLATE XX.



1. Pole Screen. Woodland Scene. *George Hicken*. (page 125.)
2. Screen Top. Woodland Scene. Bronze sky. (page 125.)

PLATE XXI.



Vase in Papier-Mâché — *Jennens & Bettridge.* (page 78.)

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gold, leaning out of a sort of canopied gold box on wheels, with a gold cord attached to the underbody to pull it along.

Two highly ornamental muffled figures under a weeping tree, are engaged with a fish net, while a Chinaman in bronze-red pyjamas, has a gold bird transfixed on a spear.

Another figure in an attitude of acute attention is fishing under a tree—evidently bottom fishing—while another scene shows a lady leading a child. The pictures are pretty and not at all grotesque. Willow-pattern runs through them all, though the legend has worn thin. The trees with many varieties of sprays and tendrils are extremely well done in fine gold work.

One feature is interesting as linking up oriental style with bronze ornament. Each picture stands on its own mossy bank, a plain green surface having been worked up into mossy banks with silvery bronze. The idea of high lights and sunshine on stones and grass-covered rocks is well carried out. Bronze-green autumn leaves carefully veined and edged, are strewn about among the rocks. There are clusters of violet flowers, also bronzed, which for size and shape might be violets, and so quite out of proportion to the quaint little figures. The whole is beautifully and delicately painted.

If one might hazard a conjecture, this tray was done in the 'sixties by a skilful workman, and the pictures were from a book of miscellaneous designs. On the other hand, the tray may illustrate a Chinese story. The bronzing metals were probably silver and lead or silver alone.

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The introduction of aluminium occurred some time in the 'fifties, though on account of its cost it was very little used till after 1864, and not freely for fifteen or twenty years after that.

Before leaving the subject of oriental design, it may be noted that at a later period, after the disastrous decadence of the 'sixties and 'seventies, when McCallum and Hodson were making their attempt to purify the prevailing taste, this kind of decoration was revived.

Small articles such as desks, blotters, inkstands and stationery-cases treated by them in this way, show refinement. They were not at all conventional Chinese, though often including pearl pagodas, flowering trees, and figures.

Simpler and more economic methods of fashioning pearl, account for its profusion and mosaic neatness in these later pieces.

CHAPTER X

DECORATION. LATER BRONZE

BEFORE the middle of the century, a very beautiful variety of bronze had come into vogue, especially adapted to portraying sunlight effects.

Wolverhampton has had the credit for the invention, though all we know about this is that Walton's were among those who executed work in this style, and produced a series of pictures, on panels or tea-trays, of interiors of cathedrals, mansions, etc. Frederick Perks working for Waltons did some of their best pieces in this style.

These later bronze pictures are developments of the earlier ones with various modifications. In the later, the sky and often background, is done with metallic powders of various shades, but a good deal of the picture is painted, and it is often very hard to tell where one begins and the other ends. Out-of-door pictures in this medium show sunny skies and atmosphere in gold-coloured bronzes, working up to the highest lights, while dark masses of trees in heavy shadow and ruined buildings gilded with sunlight, form very beautiful pictures. In a view of an interior you may be looking down on to the floor of a cathedral through a golden atmosphere streaming through gothic windows, some stained, bathing the whole interior with gold. A small procession

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of black figures is passing over the marble flags a long way below. Sunshine gilds with the brightest gold, pillars and columns in the foreground, and making long vistas of aisles sombre by contrast, pierced here and there by shafts of light from hidden windows.

Pictures like these are sometimes met with; the best are of course rare. They are very beautiful, but the question arises, Why did the artist choose a tea-tray on which to paint such a picture?

A series of pictures of interiors of cathedrals and stately homes, were a valuable addition to Walton's record of pictures by famous artists. A panel (Plate 19) of a cathedral interior, done at Walton's in the so-called Wolverhampton style, is full of architectural detail in bright sunlight. A pair of pole-screen tops (Plate 29) illustrating Church interiors are worthy of close attention. A vivid contrast is obtained of sunshine pouring through painted windows and lighting up the dim interior where priestly figures are seen officiating at an Altar over which is a picture. Statues in niches and details of carved stone work are outlined or gilded by these golden rays. In places shafts of light from windows make hard straight lines, dividing patches of sunshine and half shadow. In other places the shadow is deeper and details of masonry only dimly seen.

These different degrees of light, indicated by different mixtures of gold-coloured bronze powder, are interesting for the technical skill shown in applying and blending the simple means employed.

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Pieces of paper in which holes had been cut to correspond with the patches of sunlight, were laid on the picture, and through these holes powder was strewn on to the prepared surface. Brightest gold-coloured powder was for the brightest patches and in other parts, as for instance the fan arches of the roof where the light was more diffused, the paper patterns were filled in with powder tempered with darker shades.

Masses of light of different degrees were dealt with in this way. After this, gold borders, lines, figures, etc., were overlaid with leaf gold and picked out according to the methods explained in treating of gold work (Chapter VI). Finally, a fine pencil brush was used for the dark lines, coloured windows and other details.

The methods appear simple enough but something more than verbal instruction would be necessary to enable one to carry them out successfully!

A pair of hand-screens (Plate 9, Figs. 1 and 2), attributed to Alsager—who at that time worked for Jennens and Bettridge—are examples of the out-of-door pictures of ruins and trees in a sunny atmosphere. The general tone is low, and would suggest sunset, but for the sun being high in the heavens. The screens are well done, and the handles in carved ebony overlaid with gold, show they were deemed worthy of the best materials.

Gold and silver-coloured bronze skies and backgrounds, were in the first half of the century, the regular accompaniment of oil paintings and pic-

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tures on all sorts of articles in combination with ornament in gold, pearl and colour.

The screen-top (Plate 20, Fig. 2) is a little picture of woodland scenery with a golden bronze sky for a background. It was done at Wolverhampton about 1830-35. Pearl was freely used on the wide border, where patterns and devices in arabesques were made with pieces evidently shaped with the same tool. This is an example of picture, bronze sky, pearl and gold ornament in combination, and it is probable that three different men were employed.

Another example of golden sunshine, this time in combination with painted flowers, is a jar (Plate 21) standing 24 inches high, by Jennens and Bettridge. It is well worth careful examination. The sky is the usual gold-coloured bronze with brighter outlines of cloud in silver and gold, and a few patches of dark cloud. (The frequent repetition of the words "*gold coloured* bronze" may appear unnecessary, but to speak of it as gold bronze would be incorrect. Any colour can be bronzed with gold—hence gold bronze. *Gold coloured* bronze is bright yellow, bronzed with gold.)

On one side in the foreground, is a house of Tyrolean type by a lake, all in gold and brown bronzes, with painted figures of rustics in brightly coloured clothes. On the opposite side of the lake is a castle under a tall spreading tree, and on the water in front of the castle, is a boat with figures. Sailing-boats are dotted about the lake, and in the distance, mountains with sunset sky behind, are seen. A brilliant parrot flying over the lake in the fore-

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ground, looks as big as an aeroplane, and gives an exotic touch to the otherwise realistic picture. Groups of well-painted flowers and arabesques in brown and gold fill up the spaces.

Turning the jar round, on the other side is a large brilliant peacock with spreading tail poised on a platform of flowers. All details are painted with the greatest care and refinement, and the jar forms a pretty blending of scenery, flower painting, bronze skies, and gold ornament. It was made in Jennens and Bettridge's shop, and bears their mark, and is probably the work of more than one artist.

The making of a hollow jar out of sheets of paper would seem to present unusual difficulties. This will be explained with other mechanical details in speaking of Jennens and Bettridge's work. The interest to us lies in the coming together of gold coloured bronzes with flowers and birds.

A final example of blended styles is a shaped stationery case (Plate 16, Fig. 6). On the lid is a picture with a minutely-painted tree silhouetted against a golden sky, with lake and mountain scenery, in bronzes very like that on the jar. Placed right in the middle of the picture, on an island in the lake, is a group of Oriental temples in Alsager's own style, with pearl roofs and columns. On the front and sides of the box are flowers and leaves in pearl and gold.

The pearl leaves are a distinct reversion to the type seen on the work-case (Plate 13, Fig. 1) about thirty years earlier, with the same kind of large pieces of pearl painted with transparent purple and

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blue. The pearl flowers are more fretted at the edges and more smoothly cut than in the work-case, but the reversion is very evident.

The box dates about 1860 to 1870, but shows no trace of McCallum and Hodson's mosaic style. It is by Alsager and Neville, and is evidence that they also had the idea of reverting to old types. It seems to be a compendium of all styles—Oriental pearl pagodas, pearl flowers, gold tracery, bronze sky and painted tree.

Bronze work saw its best days before the middle of the century, by which date there was a distinct waning in the fashion for it. It was superseded by painting in oils.

PLATE XXII.



Tea Tray. *Haselar*. (page 84.)

PLATE XXIII.



Tea Tray. Paint. M. Cattell. (Page No.)

PLATE XXIV.



CHAPTER XI

DECORATION. FLOWER PAINTING

FLORAL design of some sort, runs through the whole course of papier-mâché decoration. We saw that Clay represented flowers and foliage on his trays, though he made no attempt at natural colouring and was content with neutral bronze tints and formal shapes.

Flowers at a rather later date were indicated by pearl painted with transparent colours, the colour being simply brushed over the pearl. The fact that a flower-head was intended was shown by the shape of the pearl and surrounding gold sprays, no attempt being made to shade in petals or other details. The work-case (Plate 13, Fig. 1) is an instance of this sort of flower design, and was fully described in the chapter dealing with pearl ornament. In the eighteen-twenties, bronzing by means of coloured powders was a common and popular mode of decorating papier-mâché, and flower painting did not fit easily into the scheme. We do find flowers in combination with gold bronze but it is not very common.

A few years later flower painting had largely superseded bronze colourings which were going out in favour of painting. Some very fine technical work in gold, with conventional flower painting, was

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done in the thirties before the influence of George Neville was felt in introducing realism. Tea-trays of this period are now fine possessions when they have been preserved in good condition—for finish and workmanship they have seldom been surpassed. The flowers are often boldly and effectively done and though we can sometimes recognise what flower or plant was in the mind of the artist, no real attempt at accurate painting of a special flower and its foliage, was attempted.

As might be expected transitional forms of style are found uniting in every degree purely conventional, and realistic pictures of flowers, and the two styles went on side by side blending and separating up to the end.

Naturalistic flower painting cannot be said to have come on the scene until George Neville introduced it as a result of his Continental experience. George Neville (born 1810, died 1887) was apprenticed to Jennens and Bettridge at an early age, and worked for them for some years in Birmingham. On being transferred to their branch in London, and finding his small wages insufficient for his quite modest requirements, he broke his apprenticeship by running away to Paris. He was not heard of for three years, and how he lived during that time history does not state, but he turned up at the end of the period in Birmingham and sought a job at the old works. Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge claimed the balance—two years—of his apprenticeship time, but for some reason or other gave him special terms. He settled down again to

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work for them, and soon showed that he had picked up some valuable experience in Paris.

Neville demonstrated the advantage of painting flowers naturalistically "on the black." Hitherto flowers when they were painted, were conventionally drawn and generally associated with pale or bronze backgrounds, few shopmasters viewed with favour any other background. Neville's masters were at first sceptical when he showed them a bunch of flowers on a black background, and he was permitted to ornament only a few trays in this way. His work, however, received much encouragement and popular appreciation, and was a success from the first. It was recognised that a bunch of flowers on a white or pale ground were apt to look hard and vivid, however well they were painted, in comparison with flowers on a black ground. The reason was that with a dark ground the marginal colours of the flowers partake of the sombreness, and become of much lower tone than the rest of the flower. To get this effect successfully was a decided merit with the flower painter, who called it "painting down to the black." Flowers painted in this way are much softer of outline. These remarks are of course ABC to those who understand painting and are only by way of explanation. This happened about 1830, and from that time till 1846, when he went into a business of his own, Neville worked for Jennens and Bettridge. It would be interesting to know something of his adventures during his three "wander" years, but he never alluded to them, and rumour only suggested that female influence had assisted him.

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That George Neville was an artist there can be no doubt, and had he not worked alongside another artist his name would be better known to-day.

Edwin Haselar, the artist referred to, worked for Jennens and Bettridge from 1832 till 1845 or 1846, when he was attracted to Walton's at Wolverhampton, who at that time were raking the country for the best talent. Haselar is indeed believed by some to have shown the way to realism in flower painting on papier-mâché. He and Neville worked together so closely in point of time, place and style that it is impossible to apportion the credit due between them. When they began working there was no flower painting worth mention, and between them they raised the art to a standard that was never excelled on papier-mâché.

Haselar lived to be ninety, and was one of the few who were content to pass their lives in the employ of others. He made a good position for himself; when at Walton's he had a shop to himself and six apprentices. There was an arrangement by which these working artists got a royalty on the copies of their designs that were sold, and so with six apprentices working under his directions, Haselar must have done pretty well. He was something of a dandy, and impressed his fellows by riding to and from his work on a big white horse.

The tea-tray (Plate 22) is by Haselar, painted when he was at Wolverhampton. It is good as a picture, showing his realistic way of painting pelargoniums, but a little wear and tear in its nominal function would literally take the gilt off it.

PLATE XXV.

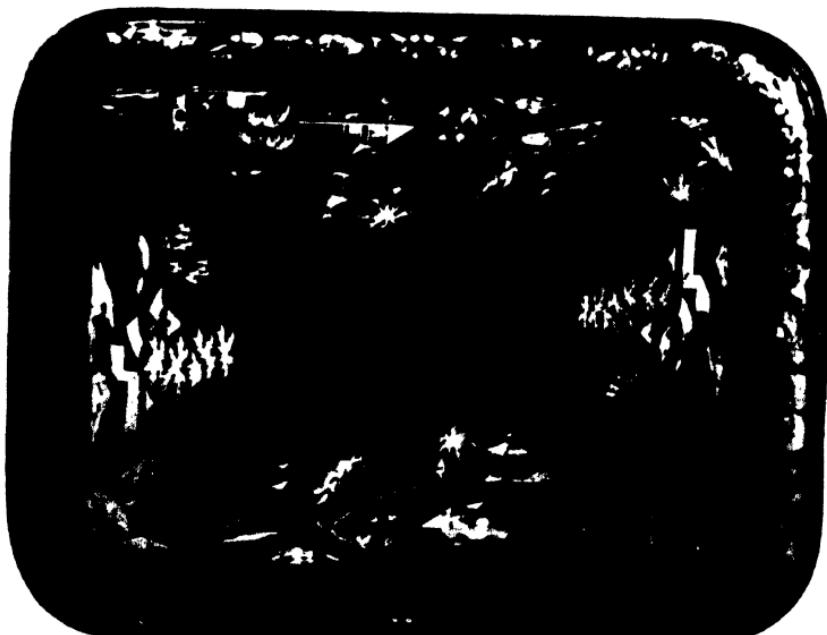
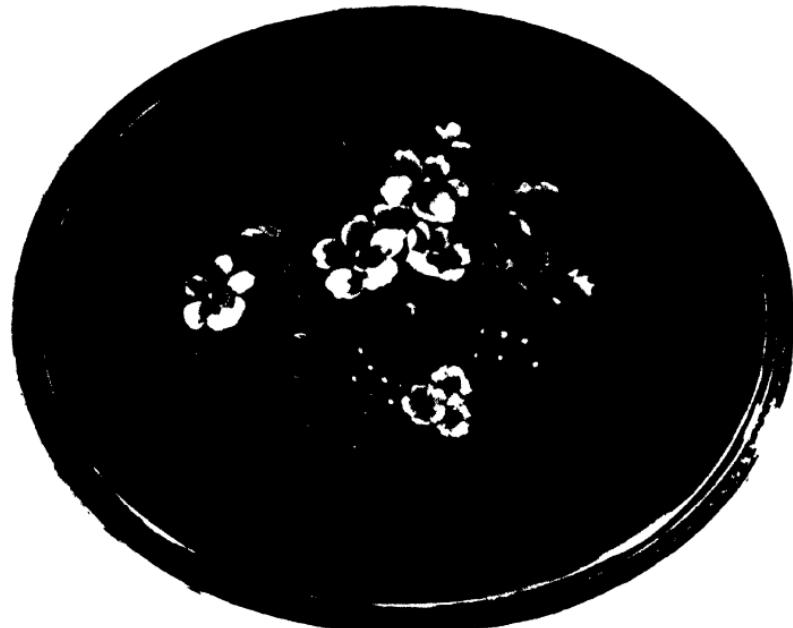
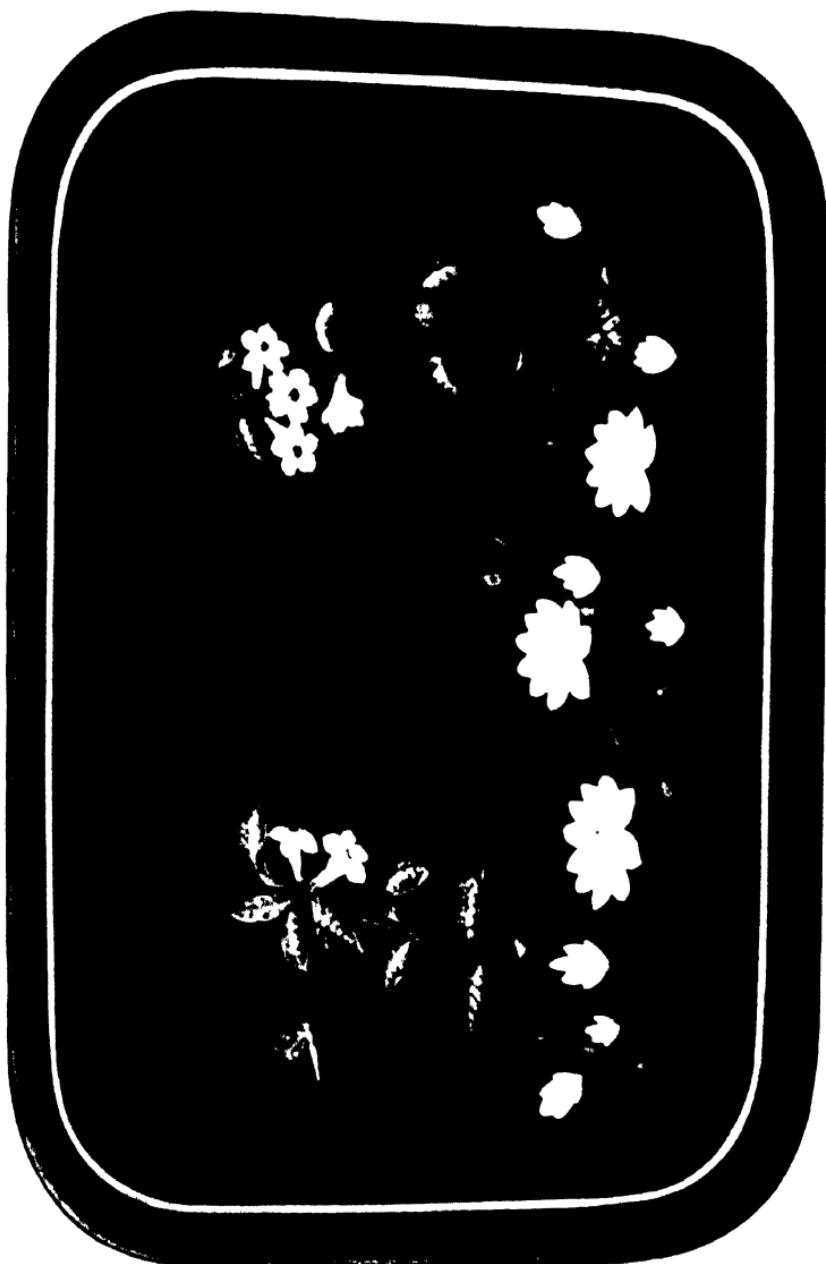


PLATE XXVI.



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An incident that occurred in the 'fifties is worth recording as illustrating the nature of the man. It was known well in advance that Her Majesty the Queen would pass through Wolverhampton by train on a certain day. Frederick Walton decided to take the opportunity of presenting her with a papier-mâché tea-tray, and it is unnecessary to say it was to be a choice specimen.

Haselar was to paint the centre, and for this purpose Mr. Walton procured some of the latest specimen roses for models. All was ready and waiting at the station when Her Majesty's train drew up. There was to be a stoppage of only three minutes and this was nearly up before the opportunity came, when the tray, laden with the finest hot-house grapes, was passed into the carriage. Forthwith the grapes were swept on to a table and the tray handed back through the window of the starting train!

The incident afforded much chaff and amusement, but it embittered Haselar's life for a long time. He was consequential in manner, and took himself very seriously.

Both Neville and Haselar were natural artists, and preferred flowers to anything else for painting on papier-mâché. At the time, opinion was by no means unanimous as to which was the better. Tradition is in favour of Haselar.

A small tray (Plate 8, Fig 2) is by George Neville. There is a fine transparency about his rose leaves that is unmistakable ; it will be noticed that not only can you see through one leaf to another, but even through a second to a third.

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The autumn-tinted bramble leaves in this picture give the idea of extreme brittleness that these leaves have after a frost. Another little point is shown in the convolvulus, which Neville never painted as a straightforward round blue flower, but always with a folded or turned-up edge showing a morsel of the reverse in another colour.

Another small tray (Plate 8 Fig. 3) is interesting to compare with Neville's, being evidently very much of a copy. It was done by a man named Thomas Hamson, who had been an apprentice under Neville. Hamson did not become famous as an artist, but did achieve some notoriety when he became a decorator for always including one or more parrots in his designs. Neville was fond of painting parrots and "Birds of Paradise," and often brought them into his pictures. But with Hamson it was different; he seldom or never painted anything without including a parrot—hence his notoriety.

For some years before leaving Jennens and Bettridge's, Neville was foreman or shop-manager, having pupils under him, some of whom became distinguished. His work at this time was mostly designing for copies, and after about 1850 he did few, if any, articles for sale.

In 1846 he joined with John Alsager, another former apprentice at Jennens and Bettridge's, and the pair had a successful partnership till Neville's death in 1887. They had a large business for many years, and trained many apprentices. We shall have to refer many times to Alsager and Neville. At the death of George Neville in 1887, McCallum and Hodson took over the business.

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George Neville was one of the very few Birmingham papier-mâché makers who lived in comfortable circumstances and left a fair fortune. He had two brothers, one of whom, James, was a die-sinker. He made dies for his brother's firm, among others, at the period when dies and stamps were used for moulding trays in place of hand moulding. When panel was supplied by the paper mills ready for use, and dies and stamps were present for moulding, the process of making a tray was rapid and simple compared to Clay's slow and laborious method which had served for 80 or 90 years.

By the year 1870, the paper-sheet method had been largely abandoned in favour of ready-made panel, and trays could be turned out at a much lower cost. These trays were never up to the standard of the old ones, neither in uniformity of body nor perfection of surface.

To return to James Neville, the die sinker, it was objected by some decorators that his designs were too showy and elaborate, and that these ornate shapes spoilt the effect of the artistic work on the centre and borders. It is not easy to decide about this. We know that artists are particular about their frames, but one might remark that if the painting was not very good, elaborately-shaped edges would not enhance it.

John Breakspear was another artist and flower painter who by his native talent became distinguished; he also was content to paint throughout his life, and did not attempt business on his own account. The tray with dead bird and fruit, the verbena panel, and the blotter with sea-birds

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(Plate 16, Figs. 1, 3 and 4) are by his hand. He was apprenticed about 1840 to Halbeard and Wellings, a firm that after some changes became Perman and Stamp, who were taken over by McCallum and Hodson in 1908.

Breakspear married in 1849—being then about 21 years old—and he painted till the end of the century, finally dying in Birmingham on the day of the historic air raid over that city in January, 1918; his death, one is glad to say, was not occasioned by the raid. He passed a long and tranquil life in the trade, and, being of a singularly gentle and amiable disposition, had many friends.

He had a son, the artist W. A. Breakspear, who was brought up in the same shop as his father. He was of equal talent and more ambition, and after studying in Paris became known as an artist who painted figures and eastern scenes. His works are to be seen in the Birmingham and other Art Galleries. He predeceased his father by a few years.

Returning to John Breakspear—flowers were his favourite study, and apart from papier-mâché he left some admirable flower pictures. The circular flower panel is a study of verbenas, and very likely was inspired by another workman artist named William Bourne, who was rather his senior, and who, after a certain period of his life, painted nothing but verbenas, very much in this style. The tray with the dead bullfinch and fruit is a characteristic study.

Philip McCallum was another artist who painted flowers. He was a commanding figure in Jennens

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and Bettridge's workshop about the middle of the century. His gigantic stature and rather imperious demeanour earned him the name of "the Great McCallum." His brother James, also an apprentice, was not so distinguished in presence, nor had he so much artistic ability as his brother, but he had other faculties which made him more successful in business when he joined Edward Hodson, and became senior partner in the firm of McCallum and Hodson. A tea-tray (Plate 23) was done while he was with Jennens and Bettridge, and is an extremely good specimen, for not only are the flowers worthy of admiration, but the general finish and "bordering" are of the very best.

The other tray (Plate 10) painted with cyclamen, is of a date perhaps about 1850. Philip McCallum's work was not so spontaneous and was a little laboured, and had not the delicacy of Haselar's nor the artistry of Neville's. The cyclamen leaves owe their silver bronzing to a white metallic powder strewn over the painted leaves while they were still wet, and allowed to dry in. Silver, lead, zinc or other white metal was employed in silver bronzing; in superior work, such as this by Philip McCallum, silver would probably be used pure.

Aluminium came in later, its general application was much extended after Bessemer's inventions allowed it to be more cheaply produced. This was in 1864, but it took a good many years for the practical application of these inventions to filter through to the papier-mâché workshops, and by that time most of the glory had gone out of the trade.

Philip McCallum had three sons, all of whom

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were apprenticed to Jennens and Bettridge. Philip, the eldest, worked with his father and became fully his equal as an artist. William, the next son, was one of those apprentices of Jennens and Bettridge who were attracted by Walton's at the Old Hall, Wolverhampton.

The youngest son, Robert—known as “the soldier”—having worked out his apprenticeship, volunteered for the Army. He fought through the Mutiny, and returned to his trade in the workshop of Alsager and Neville. He was a fair workman, but his reputation depended more on his military experiences. Philip McCallum, senior, joined Philip Nock (another apprentice) in partnership about 1854.

A few words as to Philip Nock. As a divergence, it may perhaps be excused, for if it does not explain the reasons for the non-success of the business, it certainly points a moral. Philip Nock, whose father was in comfortable circumstances, was among other things interested in amateur photography. Bringing his japanning experience of metal work to bear on his hobby—then in its infancy—he made a pocket camera of metal that seemed most satisfactory. A friend one day asked to examine this camera, and was so impressed, that he not only had one made, but patented the idea and from it made a substantial fortune.

Nemesis followed this friend in the shape of a spiritualistic medium. Shrewd and a little too sharp over matters within his comprehension, he was credulous and childlike when out of his depth. The medium—a lady of mature age—gained such

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an ascendancy over him, that after other discreditable proceedings, he broke up his home and retired with her to the Continent, where he perished miserably.

To return to the story : Philip McCallum and Philip Nock, though both having good ability as painters, did not succeed in business, and failed in about two or three years.

An excellent piece of flower painting is seen on the polescreen (Plate 24). The painter was Alfred Harvey, an illiterate man but a genius at realistic flower painting. These flowers will bear looking into; one can find many beauties and no faults in them, so much so that one is left wondering why the name of Alfred Harvey is not better known.

During the last years of his life, Alfred Harvey worked for McCallum and Hodson, and was a curious character. He painted nothing but flowers, and these by the slowest and most painstaking methods imaginable. It was said that a flower, for which he was to receive sixpence, would be painted in and rubbed out three or four times before he was satisfied with it. At times he would sit for an hour, looking at a flower, and then rub it out and begin over again. Some of his fellows said he was simply lazy. This extreme slowness, especially in doing piece work, would have meant hunger for his family, if his hard-working wife had not been ready to help by doing varnishing in the shop. Nothing could change his methods. His family were often in straitened circumstances, and occasions were known when Harvey had only half-a-crown to receive

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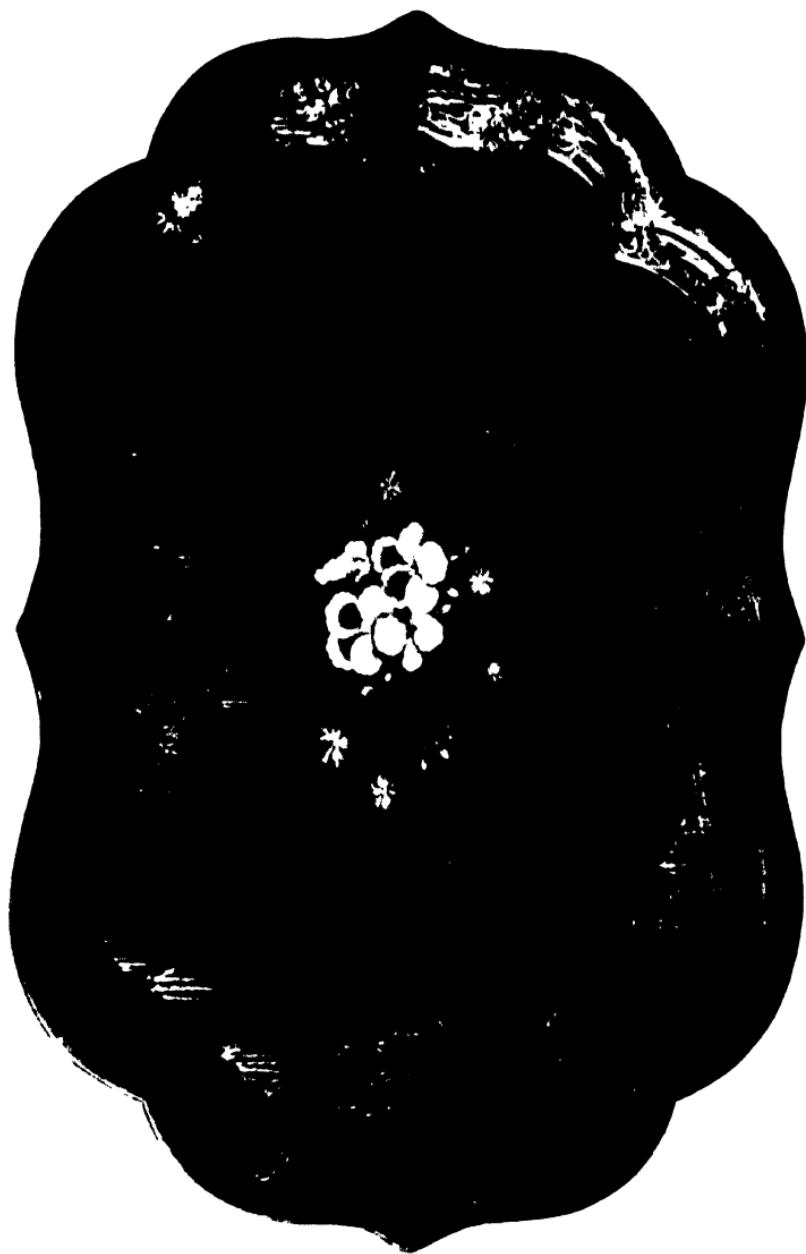
for a week's work, while his wife earned fifteen shillings.

The painted panel was not made for a screen. It was originally inserted as an ornament in the wooden cabin of a sailing ship in the tea-clipper days. The ship survived a long life at sea, and was finally broken up, when the panel was returned to the works and was found among other old stock when the shop was finally closed. A light background such as this, does not show flowers in bright colours to the best advantage, they appear rather vivid and hard against the pale ground.

The same flowers on a black or dark ground would be "painted down" to it—that is, the margins of the flowers would be slightly darkened as if there was some absorption of colour by the ground, giving a softer and more artistic picture of flowers.

A fantastic character among flower painters was Luke Amner, whose particular fancy was tulips; these he painted with great skill, but unfortunately no example can be shown here. He was Bohemian in temperament if not in nationality—a born vagabond who worked through the winter months more or less patiently, but on the first sign of Spring he was off on the tramp. The country no doubt attracted his artistic temperament, and he enjoyed her sweet pastures; but his principal object was to pick up a living somehow in a way that did not involve regular work. He was once met with among a troupe of strolling players, and at another time with a mechanical musical instrument on a sea-beach. When winter came, he turned up at the works in a

PLATE XXVII.



Tea Tray
Ukiran Bunga.—See 110.

PLATE XXVIII.



Pole Screen. (*John Lockhart*. (page 123.)



Desk. (*Spiers of Oxford*. (page 120.)

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dilapidated condition, with tags of rumour attaching to him of all sorts of adventures.

Amner had a gift, and had circumstances been different, might have left a better record. As it is, one occasionally comes across a delicately painted tulip on papier-mâché, and speculates as to whether it is his work. He was an old man thirty years ago, so would have been contemporary with Haselar and George Neville.

A tray (Plate 25) with flowers and fruit is by a man named Albert Cooper. He died about 1910 at the age of 90, having been in the trade all his life. At one time he was considered a very fair artist, but as necessity drove him to continue working after his powers were abated, he was given repairs and miscellaneous work to do. It speaks well for McCallum and Hodson that a man was never discharged on account of age.

The flowers and fruit are well painted on this particular tray, but rather hard and vivid. The border is that known as "Jackson's."

Besides these flower artists there were many men who painted flowers. Of these, some had their special flowers which they did in a perfunctory way, as for instance Jackson with his lilies-of-the-valley. These men were not flower artists, and will be considered under the different modes and fashions. Some artist workmen made a study of a particular flower which they evidently enjoyed painting—as for instance Bourne and his verbenas—and these men were to be envied if they could earn their daily bread in what was to them a labour of love.

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Others there were who did floral devices—one cannot call them flowers, for they were of no known species—to adorn a tea-tray or small article. Some were quite pretty. Had these men taken the trouble to study flowers a little, they would have left more interesting work behind them. An instance occurs to one of a series of graceful poppy-buds on hairy stalks, placed at regular intervals between the tendrils of a climbing plant. The same remark might apply to branches and foliage, done from imagination and not known in nature or belonging to any particular tree.

Coloured bronzed leaves were another ornament, conventional in form and unnatural in colour, but satisfactory enough in themselves. These made a good decoration for a tray border; but if associated—as they sometimes were—with realistic violets or other flowers, the whole effect was spoilt.

During the later years of papier-mâché some really disgraceful work was effected in pearl and floral design. It is not worth while trying to describe it. Hundreds of pieces were brought to light when McCallum and Hodson closed their business and emptied their stores, where derelict stock from extinct houses had accumulated for years.

Pieces with any saving grace fetched something, but the bulk were lumped together, made into lots, and sold for not much more than the price of fire-wood. Many of these things are still unsold, and being merely shop-soiled are likely to turn up again and figure in the education of the future collector.

CHAPTER XII

JENNENS AND BETTRIDGE

THIS firm succeeded to the business of Small and Son, Guest, Chopping and Bill, in 1816, the latter firm having succeeded Clay about 1802.

They called themselves japanners and paper-tray makers, and although we have hardly thought of this firm as making anything but papier-mâché it should be understood that all who made papier-mâché were also japanners of iron ware.

Being dealers in paper ware, it was necessary for them to be licensed, and the fact that they were so was recorded over the doorway.

It is probable that up to the time of Jennens and Bettridge, shops making paper-trays confined themselves to these and panels, and made little attempt at shaping other articles. We have heard of tables, cabinets, Sedan chairs, etc., in connection with papier-mâché, but the probability is, that before the coming of Jennens and Bettridge, very few of these articles—and then more in the way of experiments—were otherwise than decorated with ornamental panels of papier-mâché inserted into the wooden body.

One of the first things Jennens and Bettridge started to improve or vary, was tray shapes and designs. Clay's early trays had plain turned-up

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edges, called "straight-edge," and there is no evidence that other early makers made trays with any other edge, except perhaps the plain rounded edge for trays without corners.

We do not know the order in which developments in tray shapes took place, but are able to trace out a few.

A "sandwich" tray was a straight edge in which a part of the turned-up edge was flattened horizontally. This flattened part might amount to a quarter, a half, or three-quarters of the turned-up portion. We are accustomed to see this shape in iron trays. Straight-edge trays were oblong and rectangular; oval trays had "turned over" or "plain turn over" edges—as Haselar's (Plate 22), the name "Windsor" was applied to this shape. Jennens and Bettridge were much addicted to a gadroon edged tray called the Gothic, in which the turned-up edge was hollowed out with concavity inwards. The two trays of McCallum's (Plates 10 and 23) are of the variety called "King's Gothic." "Queen's Gothic" varied slightly in the arrangement of the gadroons. A "Sandwich Gothic" was the same shape, but a part of the ornamental edge was flattened. (Plate 30.)

A pattern, called "Victorian," was exclusively Walton's and is the only shape that is known to have been exclusive, this was a round tray the outline of which was a series of small semicircles. Another of Walton's patterns was a round tray formed of four semicircles. It is also a "Sandwich." A wine tray was an oval in which one side was longer than the other.

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Any new shape that appeared likely to be acceptable to the public might be copied by any shop, there being no copyright. Most shops had their stock patterns to which they applied fanciful names, which would not necessarily be known outside the shop. One often comes across these names on trays in addition to the maker's name, or appearing alone.

Boxes, desks and tea-caddies were made on a solid wood or hollow metal core, the lid and box being made separately; but for a more intricate shape—as for instance the caddy (Plate 13, Fig. 2) with sinuous front and columns—a rather different process was required.

A solid core was prepared, which was a model of the entire article, and paper sheets pasted over it. When about half the thickness of sheets required had been pasted on and stoved, a clean cut with a sharp tool was made through the covering down to the core, either vertically or horizontally according to the shape, and carried the whole way round. The two halves were then drawn apart and the core removed, after which they were brought together and the rest of the sheets put on. The same plan was adopted for a hollow vessel like the jar, for which there was no other means of extracting the solid central core.

In the case of the circular pedestal of the table, which is also fluted, the solid core round which the sheets were wrapped, was got out by a vertical cut down the front and up the back, the sides being then brought together again and finished. A neat fold of sheets of paper was made to pass from the pedestal on to the foot, and the dexterity with which this was

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done was evidence of the quality of the work. Nothing in papier-mâché processes was more difficult; on it the appearance of the table depended.

This is also the weak spot in a table, for though a solid rod was fixed down the middle of the pillar, a fall is likely to break or loosen the fold at the junction, and if there is the least movement there, the papier-mâché is cracked or crumpled up. Such an injury cannot now be repaired.

Many other varieties of shape occur in different articles, but all can be explained by one or other of these methods. Chairs have been made entirely in papier-mâché, but the material is unsuitable and few have survived unbroken. The legs had to be ponderous to stand any chance of bearing the weights imposed on them. Chair-backs in papier-mâché are common. They are generally, but not always, rather heavy and clumsy, and a better result is obtained by using a panel set in a wooden frame, as in the pair of chairs. (Plate 11, Fig. 1).

Cabinets and bookcases have been made in various combinations of wood, iron and papier-mâché ; and an enormous and grotesque bedstead, in which an iron framework was enclosed in ponderous pillars and pedestals with inlaid panels, was, and perhaps is, in existence. It was Jennens and Bettridge who, from 1820 to 1850, did most of the pioneer and experimental work, in finding out to what uses papier-mâché could be adapted. The early patents suggest what extravagant hopes were centred on the future of papier-mâché, in superseding wood and other materials.

An Illustrated Catalogue of the 1851 Exhibition

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gives wood-cuts of some of the exhibits, and confirms the opinion that it is not a satisfactory medium for furniture, where strength and rigidity are required. The forms shown are cumbersome and distorted, according to our ideas.

Pianos have been made in papier-mâché and for the ornamental outside part, it was in many ways suitable. A matter that the first makers of a papier-mâché piano only found out by experience, was that the *material* is unsuitable for a piano frame, the structure giving out no resonance and deadening the sound of vibrating strings almost completely. Thus the first piano was a failure, but when the papier-mâché frame was replaced with wood, and the material used only as a superficial ornament, the tone of the instrument was restored.

Trinket boxes and sets of drawers growing into cabinets, were popular in ladies' boudoirs a hundred years ago, and for these nothing could have been more suitable from a decorative point of view, than the papier-mâché constructions on which some of the more important shops displayed their ingenuity. A casket or trinket box (Plate 31) made by Jennens and Bettridge is an instance of their best work. The painting on the lid is a picture of Windsor Castle, it is quite a work of art and was probably by Bird or John Thomas, both of which artists painted for the firm during best period of its career between 1830 and 1850. On the front and sides of the casket are pictures of the ruins of Tintern and Netley Abbeys and on the back a picture of Virginia Water. There is some curious decoration on the top and sides where gold leaf ornament appears over transparent red

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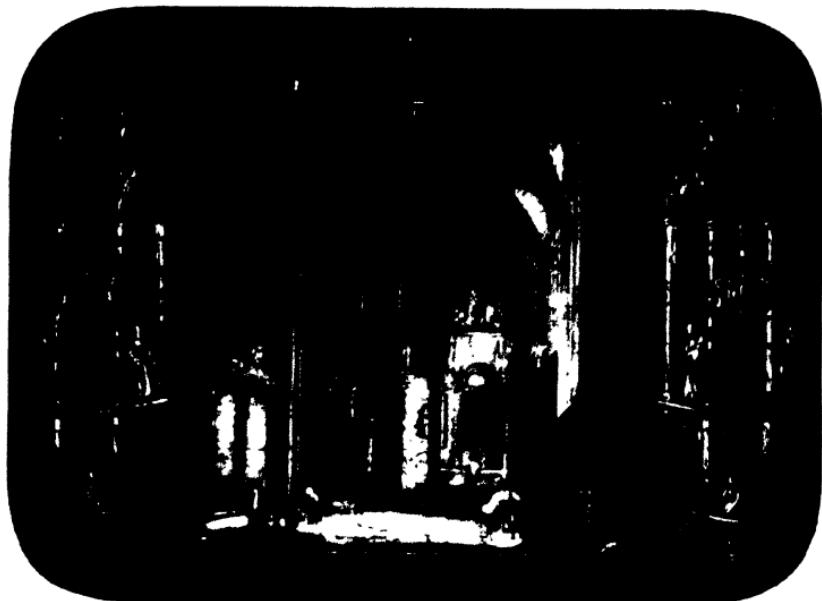
color, which is underlaid by gold leaf. At the four corners are panels in imitation of buhl. The inside is lined with white satin and red velvet, and with silver hinges, the whole piece is of the best and most expensive workmanship.

To some extent these cabinets took the place of those fascinating work-boxes and dressing-cases of Sheraton design, with their hosts of little trays and inlaid boxes. Everyone has seen these papier-mâché cabinets, and some are still using them. A useful kind of medium size often had doors opening on a single or double row of drawers. A rather more ornate style had lateral pillars (Plate 2, Fig. 2). The one here illustrated was made by Charles Neville in the workshop of Alsager and Neville, and the panels painted by George Goodman. The joinery work is excellent and the silk and velvet linings of the best quality.

A somewhat similar cabinet, though less highly ornamented, was the subject of a presentation by Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge to Miss Jenny Lind on the occasion of a visit to Birmingham in the year 1849. An illustration of the cabinet appeared in the *Illustrated London News* of that date.

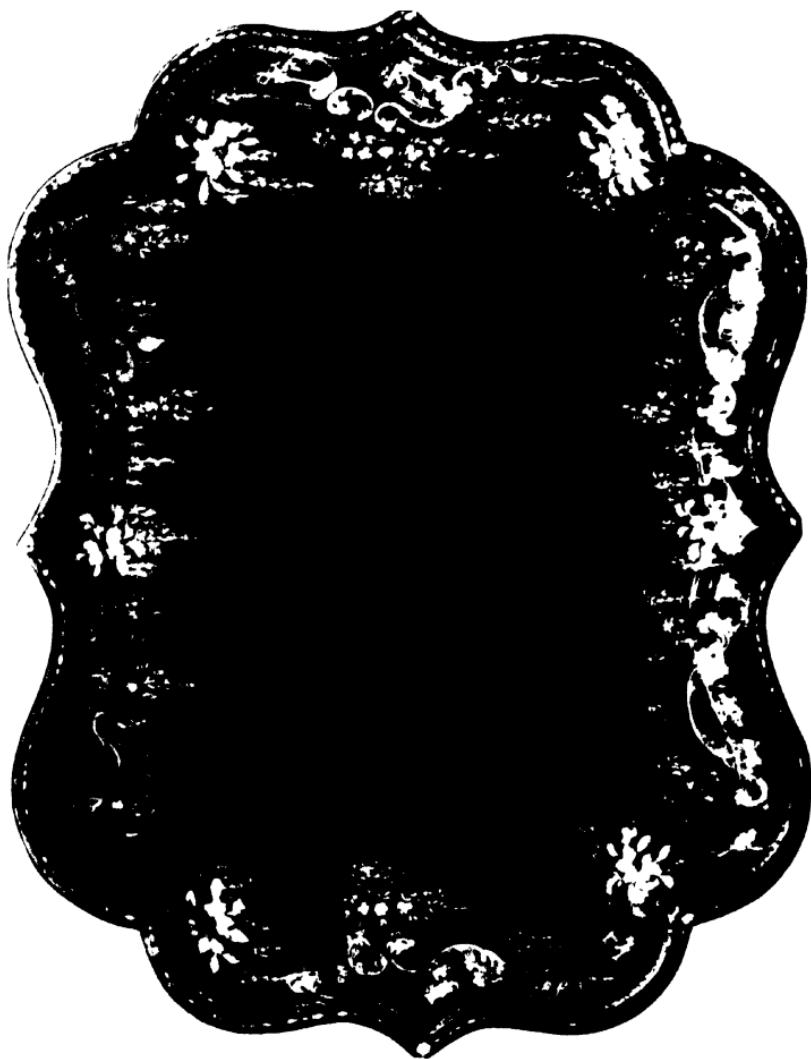
A more pretentious cabinet about four feet high, standing on legs, had a swinging mirror in papier-mâché frame fixed on the top : a part of the top lifting up to show a tray fitted with toilet articles, brushes, powder-boxes, etc. Two convex swing doors opened side-ways and exposed a double row of a dozen small drawers variously fitted with ring trays, brooch pads and fittings for jewellery, all lined in white velvet. A large drawer below was a work-

PLATE XXIX.



Church Interiors

PLATE XXX.



T'U-CHOU - Gold and Pearl Ornament. (Fig. 96.)

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box with reels and pearl-handled instruments such as ladies use for needle-work. The lowest part was a desk with sloping lid made to turn over for writing, and bearing a view of Windsor Castle. The decoration inside and out was in pearl, gold and painted flowers, all in very good style and taste.

This cabinet was made about 1850, and the price about 50 guineas. A piece such as this would be made to order or for exhibition, and would take a man some months to make.

Spirit and liqueur stands with convex doors opening outwards and racks for glasses, similarly decorated, formed the masculine equivalent to the trinket and work cabinet.

No very marked characteristics are found running through Jennens and Bettridge's manufactures, which would have enabled us to pick them out when not marked ; any article of distinctly poor quality can be safely excluded as not their work. Their productions were hardly ever bad, but employing many artists and men who were bound to vary in ability, the quality of their goods varied likewise. Two designs encountered fairly often among their things appear characteristic. On second-class pieces one often meets with a geometrical grotesque pattern with regular spaces filled in with plain patches of strong colour. A blotter (Plate 16, Fig. 2) of this order has red, blue, green, yellow, orange and white in the ornament on the cover. The spaces are contained in thick gold lines, and the articles may or may not be marked. The companion inkstand is marked.

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Another ornament frequently found on good pieces, is brown arabesque bordered with gold, and used as a filling round the principal designs ; the jar (Plate 21) and tea-tray (Plate 10) (both marked) show this ornament. Jennens and Bettridge stamped their names on the backs of a certain number of their products; but the system on which they did so—if there was one—is not apparent to us. Sometimes, in a set of three trays, one, two or all three may be marked or all escape it. Of articles in pairs, one or both may be marked. It is hard to say whether the majority were marked or not.

The stamp is sometimes “Jennens and Bettridge” alone ; sometimes “Birmingham,” or “London and Birmingham” is added. Sometimes a crown is shown; sometimes the mark is “Jennens and Bettridge, Makers to the Queen.” The crown addition probably followed this mark. A tray, which must date between 1864 and 1870 is marked “J. H. Bettridge, late Jennens and Bettridge.” It is of excellent quality, with plain gold ornament and a crest in the centre.

A few other firms marked some of their productions, but one comes across them far less often than the Jennens and Bettridge mark. Among these were : Clay and Co.; Walton and Co.; Loveridge; Deans ; Deans and Benson ; Mapleton; Alderman; and Illidge. Some of these are referred to elsewhere. Mapplebec and Lowe, whose name is sometimes found stencilled on the back of a tea-tray, were only dealers.

Jennens and Bettridge’s workshops might truly have been called the training-school for papier-

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mâché workers, and few men there were of any note who were trained elsewhere or who at no time worked for Jennens and Bettridge. Walton's, where at one time six hundred men were employed, were the only effective competitors in training men, but they did not devote so much of their resources to papier-mâché as Jennens and Bettridge did, though they probably made more tea-trays than any other firm. Apprenticeship lasted for seven years, or until the apprentice reached twenty-one.

Among Jennens and Bettridge's more famous apprentices were Haselar, Booth, two or three Nevilles, Alsager, five McCallums, two or three Nocks, two Sargents, Pettit and Hicken. This list by no means recounts all those who won fame. Apprenticeship in the japanning and papier-mâché trade was not a bed of roses, and one gasps with astonishment at what the boys were expected and required to do. Sixty hours a week was the minimum, and they were liable for twenty more, or about fourteen hours for six days a week. Their wages were as diminutive as their hours for rest and recreation, the pay was two and six for a sixty-hours week, the first year; three shillings a week for the second year, and four shillings for the third year, rising gradually to seven-and-sixpence a week for the seventh year.

The boys were liable to be required to do overtime up to eighty hours a week ; for the overtime they were paid one penny an hour in the first year, three half-pence in the second year, rising in the seventh year to fourpence an hour. Comment is superfluous; it was inhuman, and one is pleased to

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think that to-day such contracts would be impossible and obnoxious to both parties.

The firm did not make the conditions, and deserves to be honorably remembered wherever papier-mâché is appreciated, as having—through their enterprise, backed by judgment and good taste—brought the industry to the worthy position it occupied among the decorative crafts. The firm started in 1816 and went on till 1864, when they were brought down in the general depression in the trade that followed the exuberant outbreak of the 'fifties.

Elsewhere we have shown the attempt made by McCallum and Hodson to stem the tide of excessive ornament in the 'seventies; but a much earlier attempt by Jennens and Bettridge may be noted. In the Paris Exhibition of 1855, Jennens and Bettridge showed an escritoire and two chairs, about which the Editor of the contemporary *Art Journal* remarks :—“ We notice that most of the specimens sent by this firm show less of the gaudy colouring we have been used to see from this establishment. There is a tendency to a somewhat severer style of decoration, but we fear that the very facilities for producing ‘startling effects’ is a constant temptation for what in theatrical phrase may be called ‘terrific contrasts.’ ”

J. H. Bettridge carried on after the failure of the firm for a short time and joined Swan, then on Hockley Hill, but was again unsuccessful. In 1866 McCallum and Hodson succeeded to the business, and Jennens (nephew to J. H. Jennens) became their traveller.

CHAPTER XIII

WOLVERHAMPTON

WOLVERHAMPTON succeeded Pontypool as the centre of the japanning industry in the early part of the eighteenth century, but it was not till the early part of the nineteenth that japanners entered the lists and began to compete with those of Birmingham in the manufacture of papier-mâché. A good deal of attention had been paid before that time to artistic decoration for japanned wares, so that when the new material was brought in, a complete system for ornamenting it was ready to hand.

Benjamin Walton and William Ryton started together as japanners under the name of Ryton and Walton at the "Old Hall" or "Turton's Hall"—an Elizabethian mansion then falling into decay—after the death of Obadiah Ryton in 1810.

Shortly afterwards, Ryton and Walton became licensed to trade in paper ware in accordance with the Excise, and commenced making paper-trays as part of their business. The paper trade was only a side line at their works, japanning of metal wares being much more important.

In the year 1834 there were fourteen japanning works in Wolverhampton,¹ but how many of these

¹ "Story of Japan Tinplate working trades in Wolverhampton," by W. H. Jones, Mayor of Wolverhampton, 1872-73.

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had ventured into the side line it is impossible to say. Probably not many, though it is also probable that with the introduction of the ready-made 'blank' system, several more were tempted to take a hand in it. A workshop equipped for finishing and decorating japan ware, would require little extra plant for extending operations to paper trays, when these were presented to them ready for decoration. Other articles as well as trays were dealt with, such as caskets, work-boxes, hand-screens and ink-stands ; but tea-trays were always a speciality at Wolverhampton, which supplied a large—if not the major—part of these articles to the market.

It would appear that while some of the Birmingham makers were intent on multiplying the uses of papier-mâché, and experimenting in all kinds of novel ornament, the Wolverhampton men were content to go on with their smaller selection of goods, but continually trying to raise the standard by engaging excellent artists to paint the centres of trays, while clever workmen acted as borderers.

Walton's, of the Old Hall, was the most famous of the factories, and although it had its bad as well as its good times, held its place as the leading house.

Different styles of ornament followed one another as they did in Birmingham. There was at all times a good deal of interchange of artists and workmen between the two towns, and successful innovations in one place, were naturally soon imitated at the other.

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The early bronze pictures—of which one by Illidge, of Wolverhampton, “The Triumph of Britannia” (Plate 5) has been shown — were succeeded by gold work and pearl as these came into fashion in Birmingham. The application of pearl shell however was not adopted in Wolverhampton till a much later date than saw its general application in Birmingham.

We may recall that it was invented in Birmingham in 1825, but whether on account of the difficulty or expense of working it, or whether the early methods or style of decorating with it were not such as to make a popular appeal, the fact remains that several years elapsed before it came into anything like general use.

Once the fashion was established, it outran for a time all other kind of ornament in popularity—no piece was thought complete without some pearl, and the standard of ornament suffered in consequence. In Wolverhampton its adoption was delayed for some years, and it was not employed until well into the 'fifties—by which time it had for years been widely used in many shops in Birmingham.

Wolverhampton has had the credit for developing the later bronze work in which beautiful skies and atmospheres are among the choicest effects in papier-mâché ; the best of these were done at Walton's.

In spite of the talent and taste displayed at Wolverhampton, the manufacturers were led by the 1851 Exhibition into mistakes, similar to their Birmingham competitors. They did not escape the

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error of trying to produce something extraordinary and out of the way, for the exhibition. The catalogue shows some of these things, notably a vase in papier-mâché four and a half feet high and made rather in the style of the Warwick vase, with handles. It was nearly two feet across the mouth, and the making of a core of such size was a matter of great difficulty. A tree trunk was cut to length and slowly turned on a wheel. It took some weeks to turn, and was the most difficult part of the undertaking. The solid core was removed by cutting vertically through the sheets when about half the necessary number had been put on, and reuniting them by pasting on the remainder.

A standard table of papier-mâché and iron in the form of a grape vine and grapes, was another exhibit. It looks a quaint and ugly object, and one which few people would care to see outside a museum. There were also shown "Tazzas" or plaques "in the Grecian style," as well as a cabinet desk and drawers,—showing that on occasion the Wolverhampton makers did not confine themselves to tea-trays. Walton's showed a series of picture tea-trays of "England," "Ireland" and "Scotland" and one of "Windsor Castle" in Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance, Alhambra and Elizabethan styles, which appears a fairly ambitious programme.

Scriptural subjects were often the "motif" in early trays in Wolverhampton, a fashion that does not seem to have been followed in Birmingham.

Joseph Barney, an artist, native of Wolverhampton, painted trays with religious subjects. He was one of those who raised himself by his merits,

PLATE XXXI.



Inlaid Box or Casket. *Turkish & Persian*. (page 99.)

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and his pictures are now highly valued. Descriptive scenes for altar pieces were among his designs, such subjects as “Daniel in the lion’s den” and the “Descent from the Cross” being chosen.

Edward Bird was an artist who came to the front through this opening ; born in 1772, the son of a carpenter, and apprenticed at the ‘Old Hall,’ he became an Academician in 1817. An Exhibition in 1807 showed two of his pictures entitled “Chevy Chase” and “Death of Eli.” George Wallis was another apprentice of Walton’s, who from painting papier-mâché worked up to pictures and became a recognised artist and authority on art. He was born in 1811, and would be contemporary with Haselar and Neville.

In an exhibition of Arts and Crafts in 1838, Richard Stubbs, employed by a prominent japanner, Edward Perry, took the first prize with a papier-mâché table ; and an employee in the well-known firm of Mander and Co. took the second prize.

The year 1845 was a critical one in the history of Walton’s, the senior partner, Benjamin Walton, dying very shortly after the firm had declared itself unable to meet its liabilities.

After a strenuous struggle, in which Frederick Walton (son of the late Benjamin) showed remarkable enterprise and determination, the firm again established itself, and carried the revival still further by collecting the best talent available. Artists wherever they could be found were attracted ; among those secured were Ed. Haselar, the flower-painter, and another celebrated flower-painter named Richard Steele, who had made his reputation

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by painting in the Potteries. George Hicken was another artist engaged by Walton, he was employed in painting landscapes mostly, on tea-trays. He painted the picture on the pole screen (Plate 20, Fig. 1) after the manner of Birket Foster or perhaps a copy of one of his pictures. The firm also brought from Dusseldorf, a German named Voss, who visited popular beauty-spots such as Dovedale, Llangollen, and Conway Estuary, for his pictures. Moreover, Walton's held out attractions to all time-expired apprentices from Jennens and Bettridge, and gave them all a trial.

Other firms of well-known japanners exhibited in the London '51 Exhibition, and competed for the leadership of the industry during the temporary eclipse of Walton's. One of these firms was Shoolbread and Loveridge—afterwards H. Loveridge and Co. A tray (Plate 26) of excellent paper-sheet make and well painted with flowers, is by them.

Fearncombe and Co. showed in the Exhibition. They did not make goods themselves, but decorated blanks obtained from McCallum and Hodson and other firms. Another tea-tray (Plate 27) is by an obscure artist named William Wylie, who worked in Zoar Street. The body is made from pasted sheets blocked into "sandwich Gothic" shape, and the ornamentation is particularly good. The modest flowers in the centre are well painted, and the surrounding gold sprays and tracery unusually delicate. The body color of this tray is a rich red or crimson. This was not obtained by a coating of paint over the black surface, but by the addition of Indian red mixed throughout with the

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tar varnish. All the varnish used in sticking the sheets together was colored in this way.

In the Exhibition year, a great strike of japanners took place which lasted for about twelve months. The industry, however, recovered itself, and some new firms came on the scene.

In the years 1860 to 1870 both industries had a severe set-back—so far as tea-trays were concerned,—by the introduction of silver-plating on a large scale. For a time the public would have nothing else but silver-plated trays ; and after this, papier-mâché trays of best quality were seldom made.

It has been already stated that the feature of the industry in Wolverhampton, was the ambition to excel in artistic quality of decoration, rather than to compete with Birmingham in multiplying the variety of articles and uses to which papier-mâché could be adapted. The makers confined themselves to a large extent to tea-trays which, painted by artists of repute, often took on the quality of valuable pictures. Whether or not it was a sound idea to paint a picture on a tea-tray is a question ; and whether the picture—if a good one—would not be better suited to canvas, is another question.

Some of these valuable trays are found in private collections where they are highly esteemed and,—needless to say—have never fulfilled their normal functions.

The artists Bird, Raven, Underhill, Barney, Stanier, Wallis and Worsey are among those who learnt to paint on papier-mâché, and afterwards passed on to legitimate picture painting and made names for themselves in that sphere.

CHAPTER XIV

MEN AND MODES

SOCIAL conditions under which men live have some influence on the industry in which they are employed, and this truism is nowhere more marked than in the trade with which we are concerned.

The custom was for boys to go to work very young, either as apprentices or shop-boys; generally their ages were in single figures when they went with their fathers regularly to work. The youngsters had had very little education ; what they had was haphazard and taught on no system ; and thenceforth their lives would be spent in the limited outlook of the workshop. A youth might have ability, but for want of education might never be able to make anything of it, while one without any particular intelligence was not at all likely to rise above the level of his circumstances.

In the conditions existing about 1850, a number of boys were employed in the japanning trade, and had very little opportunity of improving their standard of living. Little outside interest was taken in educating them or bringing pressure to bear on the parents to get their children educated. In the light of their experience, men and boys felt no anxiety as to the future. Their trade had been a growing one, there was no reason for

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unemployment, and they had no particular reason to exert themselves to prepare for difficulties in the future.

Amusements for the young were practically unknown, except such as they found out-of-doors in suitable weather. A theatre or two showed intermittently and circuses paid occasional visits ; but except for these and a few nondescript entertainments that cropped up, there was nothing. The Men's Institute in Birmingham consisted of a single room on a first or second floor. It had no attraction, and was attended by few.

Among workmen earning regular wages, such diversions as supper clubs, arranged among themselves, were a common way of passing festive evenings, and once a week at least they indulged in a feast.

These clubs were numerous, and the supper—consisting generally of boiled mutton and "trimmings"—was supplied at a flat rate of one shilling. The profit probably came from the beer consumed. Men might belong to two or three clubs, paying 25s. a half year for twenty-four suppers in each club. The odd shilling went into a fund to pay for extra tickets which were drawn for, and either given to friends or sold by the lucky winner. The supper took place at a public-house, and as other trades had their supper clubs a popular house would have very frequent entertainments going on.

The workmen's evenings, whether at a supper or not, were practically all spent in the public-house. This was the regular habit of the large majority.

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Those who found something to do at home or had other interests, were so few as to be looked upon as eccentrics by their fellows. The men seldom drank to excess, but consumed a good deal of beer, and with it the balance between their wages and home expenses. They worked steadily in the day-time in familiar and not uncongenial surroundings, and enjoyed their evenings in gossiping and drinking beer, with an occasional wager on a coming horse-race. There were cliques of regular customers attached to certain houses, with some tendency for trades to stick together. Their lives were by no means unhappy, and if they had no aspirations to worry them, their lot might be envied by those of any date ; but our sympathy goes out to the women and children, who must have had an appallingly dull time. The boys would be looking forward eagerly to the time when they would be considered not too young to go to work.

Customs and habits such as these brought the workmen of a trade into very close association, and had their effect on the industry in which they were engaged. The communal life, subject so entirely to workshop etiquette and their own codes of behaviour sometimes brought the men into trying circumstances.

Workshop discipline was very rigid in one respect ; there was no immediate dealing between workman and master. The master was an autocrat, and could and would call any man to account without hesitation ; but the workman, if he wanted to make application to the master, had to do it through the foreman. This rule was rigid, and sometimes

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bore hardly on men who might have grievances of long standing—perhaps on account of the very foreman who was their only outlet for expression.

It can be understood that in these conditions, abuses might easily follow the power in the hands of a foreman, which prevented a man from getting into touch with the owner of a shop. These abuses did occur, and some of the foremen found means to enrich themselves at the men's expense, though they had to be careful not to overstep certain recognised limits.

Cases are known in which, after a few years, foremen so benefitted themselves, that they were able to set up shops on their own account, and eventually became wealthy owners, though their doings and methods were chronicled against them in private meeting-places. However, as we are not dealing with ancient history, and family traditions extend to more than one generation, where we cannot praise "seizer" we had better bury him.

In the shops, decorators, borderers, "liners" (these were men who did the gold lines round the borders of trays; the vocation of "liner" appears in the Trade Directory) and gold workers were either given copies to work on, or else had a free hand on a piece of work for their own design. The work they did was priced up on completion, and paid for at a weekly settlement.

A man putting some originality or observation into his work, either by a quicker or simplified method of copying, or taking advantage of something he had heard of or seen, would find the benefit on pay-day.

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Consequently a smart man would be on the alert for new ideas, and an original device would rapidly pass from one shop to another, while gossip over a taproom table, would no doubt be responsible for a wholesale imitation of an ornament if it promised to be popular.

In this way it was that the social conditions of the papier-mâché workmen would have an influence on the industry. Their mode of life and their absence of acute competition, would not tend to train men to be specially observant, but a natural faculty or greater alertness would give any decorator a decided advantage. Hence it came about that an original idea becoming broadcast to a number of men almost simultaneously, would have all sorts of imitation and variations made in different places; and as there was no copyright or etiquette involved, the novelty would become fashionable or dwindle away according to its merits, as judged by popular taste.

As an instance of what took place, on one occasion, some gates decorated with green malachite inlay and specially made for one of the Russian Palaces, were brought to public notice at the 1862 Exhibition. It occurred to George Harper, a decorator for Alsager and Neville, to try malachite as a decoration for papier-mâché. The fashion caught on, and a number of tables and trays were made and sold. These articles, and others in the style, are still to be found; the ornament is in good taste, and makes a suitable border decoration for a black ground. The pieces are in such a variety of quality as to show that they were made in several different shops.

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Another fashion, inspired by the death of the Prince Consort, was for "ceremonial ware," as it was called. It was a form of ornament in pearl with mauve and grey colours. A casket (Plate 4, Fig. 4) in half tones, and an inkstand (Plate 14, Fig. 2) after this style, are of a general low tone, though had it not been suggested it is unlikely that one would recognize that it was intended for mourning ornament. Blotters, inkstands, paper-racks and work-boxes were the articles made, but the significance is generally overlooked.

A man named David Sargent was long remembered in connection with "Sargent's fern." He was with Jennens and Bettridge, then with Footherope and Shenton, and finished up with McCallum and Hodson. Examples of his pattern are to be met with, either painted or designed by him or imitated by others. Sargent's fern was done with meticulous regularity and precision, every atom of frond showing without flaw and generally in vivid green; but to our mind it is not attractive. The background was white, yellow or gray, and the design held the public taste for years.

The fern pattern was succeeded by the shell pattern, invented by Sargent or Charles Neville. Sea-shells in brown and gold bronze in a row round the margin of a tray, and sometimes on the tray itself in regular pattern; is the brief description. Great numbers of these trays must have been made, for they are still common. A bad feature of some makes of these straight-edge trays, is that bottom and sides were made separately and stuck together. This

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may be a source of weakness, for they are often found with bottom and sides coming apart.

Jennens and Bettridge and a few other firms, sometimes made up trays in which the paper pasted edges were made separately, and afterwards attached to a piece of panel which formed the bottom. In the hands of good workmen the results of this method were quite satisfactory.

Jackson's "Lilies-of-the-Valley" constituted a favourite ornament for blotters, bellows and other small articles. The fashion was introduced by William Jackson, and in his hands and on a suitable background was very effective.

A pair of bellows (Plate 2, Fig. 1)—lilies-of-the-valley on a black ground—is by or after the style of Jackson, and shows taste and skill. Other examples of his lilies are not always so happy, the effect sometimes being spoilt by a pale or white background. This design shared the fate of others that had attracted attention, and was copied in styles very inferior to the original. We not uncommonly come across sheaves of lilies with monotonous rows of white flowers along the stalks, the leaves and stalks being painted in vivid green with painful regularity. Beyond the fact that no one could help recognising what they are intended for, it is difficult to see what attraction they could have had for a large number of people.

Jackson also designed a tray border which appears on Cooper's tray (Plate 25, Fig. 1).

Heath and heather in a similar style to the fern and lilies was another popular design. It was done

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by different men in several shops as a standard device. It is not so stiff as the other, but frequently suffers through the same pale background. No particular man's name is associated with it. Heath, heather and fern had been preceded by imitation wood graining.

This style had been exceedingly popular at one time about the sixties, so much so that the shops were kept extremely busy with it, and special shops were erected in some cases to cope with the demand. All shops that decorated papier-mâché took a hand in this production, and as it was neither difficult to do nor costly to turn out, they did a very prosperous trade in it.

Among the grainings, walnut was the most popular, and was perhaps the most successfully imitated. So many hands being involved it is not surprising that the results varied very much in quality, some of the pieces that survive are very good indeed, and others equally bad.

Besides graining and marbling there was an imitation of red French buhl (Plate 31) that was surprisingly effective in the hands of a good workman. The clouded red and brown or black colour, was obtained by strewing red powder in irregular quantities on a brown or black painted surface while the paint was still moist, and mopping it about with a bob of cotton waste. When it had dried the surface was rubbed down with pumice followed by soft leather until quite smooth and glossy.

The cloudiness was produced by the unequal amounts of red in different patches. The surface

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was then varnished and gold design in likeness of the brass-work on buhl, applied in gold leaf. The result in some cases was very good but such pieces are not common.

Spiers and Son, of Oxford, enjoyed considerable notoriety for their paintings of characteristic Oxford buildings and views, done on various articles of papier-mâché. In the London Exhibition of 1851 this firm showed some tables, desks and cabinets decorated rather lavishly as was then the fashion, but having as the principal ornament a painting of an Oxford college or other building.

Some of these paintings were extremely good and survive by virtue of their merits which mellowed a little by age, may be appreciated and admired to-day. A desk (Plate 28, Fig. 2) shows the usual gold and colour ornament in quiet and good taste, and has a very pleasing picture of the Martyr's Memorial surrounded by trees in full summer dress.

It is doubtful if Spiers and Son did more than paint these Oxford scenes on goods supplied to them by papier-mâché makers, either in the blank or partly decorated. At one time Alsager and Neville made all these articles for them, Spiers and Son painting the picture and engraving their name, "Spiers and Son, Oxford," on the back of the article.

To return to the 'sixties; Peter Jones had been a workman at Jennens and Bettridge's, and left the trade to go into some slate-marbling works. There he learnt some secrets of the trade, and one day presented himself to Alsager and Neville, offering to introduce a new style of decoration. His offer

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was accepted after a trial, and he was given a number of articles to work upon, which he did to the firm's satisfaction. Jones was very careful to carry on all his processes in strict seclusion, and required a separate shop, which he kept locked up in his absence. Presuming too much on the exclusiveness of his powers, he annoyed his masters, who dispensed with his services. The foreman made a careful examination of the shop, discovered what was wanted, and thenceforth marbling became one of their standard productions. The tray (Plate 4, Fig. 1) is by Jones.

Newman was a decorator who learnt his trade at the Old Hall. He was something of an artist, and rather eccentric. After painting in a general way for some time, he centred his attention on painting peacocks, which for their unfailing appearance in environs suitable and unsuitable, became something of a joke in the workshops. The foreman had a personal objection to Newman, apart from his speciality, and at a weekly show-up of work for payment, roughly told Newman that he had "had enough of him and his damned peacocks" and forthwith rubbed off the painting on the articles. Newman protested and approached Mr. Walton, who supported his foreman.

Newman then invoked the law, and summoned the firm for the money due to him. The case actually came to court, to the excitement of many interested, and Newman obtained a verdict in his favour on the ground that, however suitable or unsuitable his decoration may have been, the fore-

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man had destroyed the evidence by rubbing out the work.

The event was the subject of endless argument in all the taprooms, and Newman's abilities were transferred elsewhere—which happened to be Loveridge's. Another workman, named Pardoe, who was on a long-term engagement with Walton's, appeared as Newman's witness in the Court of Law. He was afterwards told that he would not find it to his advantage to seek to carry out the remainder of his agreement. He subsequently worked for Alsager and Neville.

William Bourne was a working artist in the early days, being a middle-aged man in 1850. He had been brought up to pottery painting before going to Wolverhampton. He worked for the Old Hall and other places, but never exclusively for one firm. A good natural artist, at one stage of his life, he would paint nothing but verbenas (then becoming a fashionable flower), in which he revelled, and achieved a style of his own. The round panel painted with verbenas by Breakspear (Plate 16, Fig. 1) is typical of this style, which no doubt was imitated by Breakspear. Bourne went to Birmingham after Wolverhampton, and was contemporary with Breakspear.

We have already seen something of John Alsager, who, after finishing his apprenticeship with Jennens and Bettridge, continued working for them until he joined George Neville in partnership. His special line was Indian and Chinese design. Alsager did not study authentic Oriental models, but worked in a style that was accepted as representing the

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Oriental. One of a pair of screens (Plate 28, Fig. 1) is typical of Alsager's style and among the best specimens of his work. They were done about the time he left Jennens and Bettridge and joined George Neville in 1846. A small card tray (Plate 8, Fig. 4) was his work, during his apprenticeship, and the stationery case (Plate 16, Fig. 6) was probably done by him during his partnership. His style was neat and graceful, and was peculiar for the way he clustered the temples and pillars together. He died in the 'sixties. A card case (Plate 8, Fig. 5) on which the pearl work is by Alsager, is interesting from having the remainder of the decoration by George Neville. It was probably done soon after the partnership stated.

"Brown's borders" must be mentioned among the popular ornaments about 1850. The tray (Plate 25, Fig. 2.) is an example. The border of formal flowers, in which roses and convolvulus are recognisable, was well filled. All the colours are bronzed, the convolvulus leaves in silvery brown being pretty and forming an effective surround to the Chinese patterns in the middle. At a monthly survey of work at the Old Hall, Mr. Walton was in favour of dropping "Brown's borders," of which he thought sufficient had been done; but he was assured by his travellers that they were the best sellers at the time. So "Brown's borders" remained a well-established style of ornament.

Davis was a painter of some merit, his subjects being mostly of country and rustic scenes. He belonged to the early days, those of the first half of the century, but lived to be a very old man, and

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after working at Wolverhampton went to Birmingham, finally dying suddenly in McCallum and Hodson's shop. He was probably the same Davis referred to by W. C. Aitken¹ as being the artist who executed two allegorical pictures in early bronzes, and as a copyist of Morland's rustic subjects.

George Goodman, of Wolverhampton, and afterward Birmingham, was trained at the Old Hall, and developed a fine talent, becoming a recognised artist in later life. For some reason that has not transpired, he used the name of Foley when painting on canvas, and pictures so signed are still to be found. He painted the panels on Charles Neville's cabinet (Plate 2, Fig. 2).

Thomas Hamson we have already met with as an apprentice under George Neville and having a particular inclination for painting parrots. Another workman, George Hanson, also had a fad. He had no particular gift for ordinary work, but wonderful cleverness in painting and drawing mice, that won the admiration of his fellow workmen. He spent his spare time in this way, but made no attempt to introduce them into his work—a fact which is to be regretted.

A foreman named Lee, or "Daddy" Lee, was in one of Jennens and Bettridge's shops in 1850. He was then an old man, a very rough character, and much exercised in keeping order among the graceless youngsters. His work was not distinguished, and apology must be made for a wide divergence which seems to throw an interesting

¹ Aitken.

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sidelight on the intellectual condition of the class at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Lee used to relate how he remembered his mother, panic-stricken by the imminence—as it appeared to her—of a hostile incursion by Napoleon Bonaparte into her neighbourhood (Wolverhampton), burying her best bonnet in her garden for safety.

George Hicken finished his apprenticeship at Jennens and Bettridge's about 1852 and afterwards became a decorator and then artist. He painted landscapes and rustic scenes. Birket Foster's pictures were specially selected for copying by painters at that time, and Hicken was among these artists. Pictures by him on canvas have changed hands recently. The screen-top (Plate 20, Fig. 1) is a copy by him of one of Birket Foster's pictures and another screen-top (Plate 20, Fig. 2) is to compare with it. The artist is unknown, but the landscape is quite equal to Hicken's copy of Birket Foster. The bronze sky background points to it being earlier in date than the other; there was no hard-and-fast rule, for some artists continued the bronze sky backgrounds after others had given them up, in favour of painted colours. The pearl work round the border of this screen is excellent; a press tool was probably in use, for there is a frequent repetition of some of the more complicated shapes. It is possible however these may have been cut out by acid.

Two brothers, James and John Hinks, decorated for McCallum and Hodson. James did landscapes, and copied on papier-mâché such well-known pictures as "The Deerstalkers." John

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Hinks was known as the inventor or creator of the "Persian style" of decoration. The name "Persian style" was by no means an accurately descriptive one, any more than the name "Nile Lily" for a plant that is not a lily and is not found in Egypt, could be said to be. It served, however, to bring to mind a particular pattern, and came about in this way. John Hinks was painting an album cover, and having cut up the surface with broad gold lines and scrolls, began to divide and subdivide the spaces further, filling them up with colours as he went along. The pattern was evolved as it proceeded, and when finished someone likened it to a Turkey carpet or Persian rug. Thenceforth under the name of "Persian style" it was painted, copied and sold. There was a great demand for articles thus decorated for four or five years, and at times the shops had difficulty in producing them fast enough.

Frederick Perks was a workman at the Old Hall, and afterwards an artist. He did some of those beautiful golden bronze interiors that have been mentioned.

Charles Pettit, an apprentice of Jennens and Bettridge, afterwards became an artist whose pictures had a good market in Wolverhampton. He was plaintiff in a rather peculiar case. A well-known man in a good position commissioned him to paint a picture for him of a particular subject. The picture was painted, delivered and paid for in due course. Forthwith the owner of the picture had a number of copies made and sold them at a very good profit as the work of Charles Pettit. The artist

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heard of this and took proceedings, with the result that the well-known man had to buy back the copies, pay all expenses, and give an undertaking not to offend again.

It seems a singularly inept kind of fraud for a man in his position to be guilty of; but there is a possible explanation. We have seen that artists of repute were employed by the big japanners to paint patterns and subjects such as flowers, etc., for their apprentices and others to copy on japan ware and papier-mâché. These reproductions from an artist's designs would be called his work, though they would of course be unsigned. It is possible the gentleman in question thought he would be justified in following this course with Pettit's picture.

Berks was a figure- and portrait-painter who worked for McCallum and Hodson. He painted a good many pictures of royal persons on papier-mâché, principally for loyal subjects abroad.

Three Stanier brothers were trained at the Old Hall, and afterwards worked for Jennens and Bettridge. The most distinguished was Harry Stanier, who showed great ability and became an artist, specialising in Egyptian subjects.

Sadler, a "liner" who worked at the Old Hall in 1845 and onwards, deserves mention. A "liner" or "filleteer," painted the lines—generally gold lines—round the edges or borders of tea-trays. It was a kind of work that required extraordinary steadiness and knack. Sadler could take a 30-inch oval tray in his left hand and with one sweep of his

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brush held in the right hand, make a completely finished line round the border of the tray. "Liner" and "filleteer" were recognised trades, and recorded as such in the Trades Directory.

The attempt by McCallum and Hodson to restore the trade, when it seemed to be going from bad to worse, by a return to purer forms of ornament, has been referred to. In earlier days much credit and prosperity had followed these decorations, and it seemed to McCallum and Hodson that something might be done by reverting to the old types. Gross and untidy pearl ornament was replaced by a neat symmetrical design that is well described as "mosaic," from the perfect fitting and regular placement. This was combined with gold and flowers.

Had the reform taken place earlier, or had the appetite been less vitiated, the effort would probably have been of some use; but the unhealthy conditions had gone too far.

Yet *some* really good work was turned out between this time (1875) and the end of the century, and in one or two shops in Birmingham and also in Wolverhampton up to a very few years ago, a small corner might have been found in which still hung on an old workman, trained in the good old days, and whom time had left behind. He still pasted his sheets together and rasped the edges by hand, without consideration of the time it took. Such decoration as fell within his scope he applied to these wares, which otherwise remained unfinished or received the finishing current among japanned goods of the time. When the time at last came that

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the old man no longer worked, there was no one to carry on his job, and that particular trade may be said to have died. The market at this time was flooded with cheap florid goods; the result was that people who might have bought held aloof, they would not pay the price for the one and despised the other.

Some of this poor work found a market with other tawdry things of the time. As an instance of the cheapening process and what was sold under the name of papier-mâché, sets of trays, three in a set, were made and sold for six-and-six-pence. Let us recall, side by side with this, that Clay a hundred years before, had made a profit of more than three pounds on each of his trays.¹

It must have been heart-breaking for the old workmen who had been through the prosperous days in Jennens and Bettridge's workshops, to see inferior things glutting the market, well knowing that they were still capable of producing the choice articles that had been so well received in the past. The showroom still held some of the best, but was neglected for reasons already shown.

This group of men—left over from shops already closed—comprising men of 60, 70 and even 80 years old, who had worked together from boyhood and had risen to be highly skilled workmen and working artists, were now fiddling about and merely passing the time away. The trade had slipped past them and got out of hand. The younger men, in most cases, had been able to remove themselves to something

¹ Aitken.

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else, their training finding them openings in other decorative trades. But to men of 50 and over, whose experience was limited to a papier-mâché workshop, this was impossible.

One shop after another closed down, and a small pathetic band drifted to the still existing ones, and so it went on until McCallum and Hodson alone remained. On one occasion, about twenty-five years ago, Mr. Edward Henry Hodson (son of the original partner, Mr. Edward Hodson) when looking round his large showroom full of things made years before, but empty of customers, turned to a foreman and said, "I can't understand it, there seems to be a prejudice against papier-mâché." No words could have expressed it better: there was a prejudice, and we have seen the reason.

McCallum and Hodson hung on till 1920, though very little business had been done for years. It afforded some kind of livelihood to many old workmen, for no one was discharged on account of age or absence of work. This generous treatment is a bright spot to dwell upon, as affording a dignified exit to a worthy industry.

It is safe to say that papier-mâché, as we know it, will never be made again. The idea of obtaining material for the body, by pasting sheets of paper together by hand, would not be entertained to-day.

Woodpulp is used for many purposes, and among others for making so-called papier-mâché parts for motor-cars and telephones, and no doubt it could be used in place of paper with good results. Having got a body which was fairly suitable, no

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special difficulty would be found in smoothing and polishing the surface. Artists could be found to paint flowers or pictures as well as ever; the gold, pearl, and bronze work would be the difficulty.

Men required a long training under other men skilled in special arts and methods of using them, and such men no longer exist. By no known methods, and by no conceivable ones, could we obtain results identical with those from the original methods, and we must make up our minds to make the most of what we have. There are plenty of specimens in the country, though a small proportion only of them are first class; for in no small industry was there greater contrast between the good and the bad.

The position to-day seems to be that the prejudice against papier-mâché has died a lingering death. After contempt, followed by indifference, people have begun to reconsider papier-mâché on its merits, and are making up their minds that there is something good and worthy of interest in it. The vulgar assortment, though finding its way gradually to the destructor and old-rubbish shop, rather stands in the way of a revival of interest by the disgust it excites in those looking for something in better taste.

One comes across odd mixtures of the best and worst in antique shops; but the process of selection is afoot and these mixtures will soon be sorted out. Good pieces are recognised and appreciated, and to make up for the lack in numbers, old trays are being collected, and—where the ornament has suffered—redecorated with flowers and pictures,

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advantage being taken as far as possible of existing borders.

Scores of these trays have appeared, and will appear more and more now that the taste for papier-mâché has revived. But at present, at any rate, there is no difficulty in distinguishing them from the old masterpieces. The character of the painting does not distinguish them, for all sorts of qualities are found in old trays. Up to the present we have seen no redecorated tray that had a fine finished surface. Recent painting can be distinguished in the dark as well as in the light by passing the hand over it. One misses at once the smooth, glossy surface.

A word of warning may be permitted. Many trays, beautifully ornamented as regards the border, were left quite plain in the middle. This we believe was the result of a well-considered design, for such borders are a work of art in themselves. Let not therefore the mistake of "painting the lily" be made, by filling the middle with ornament.

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